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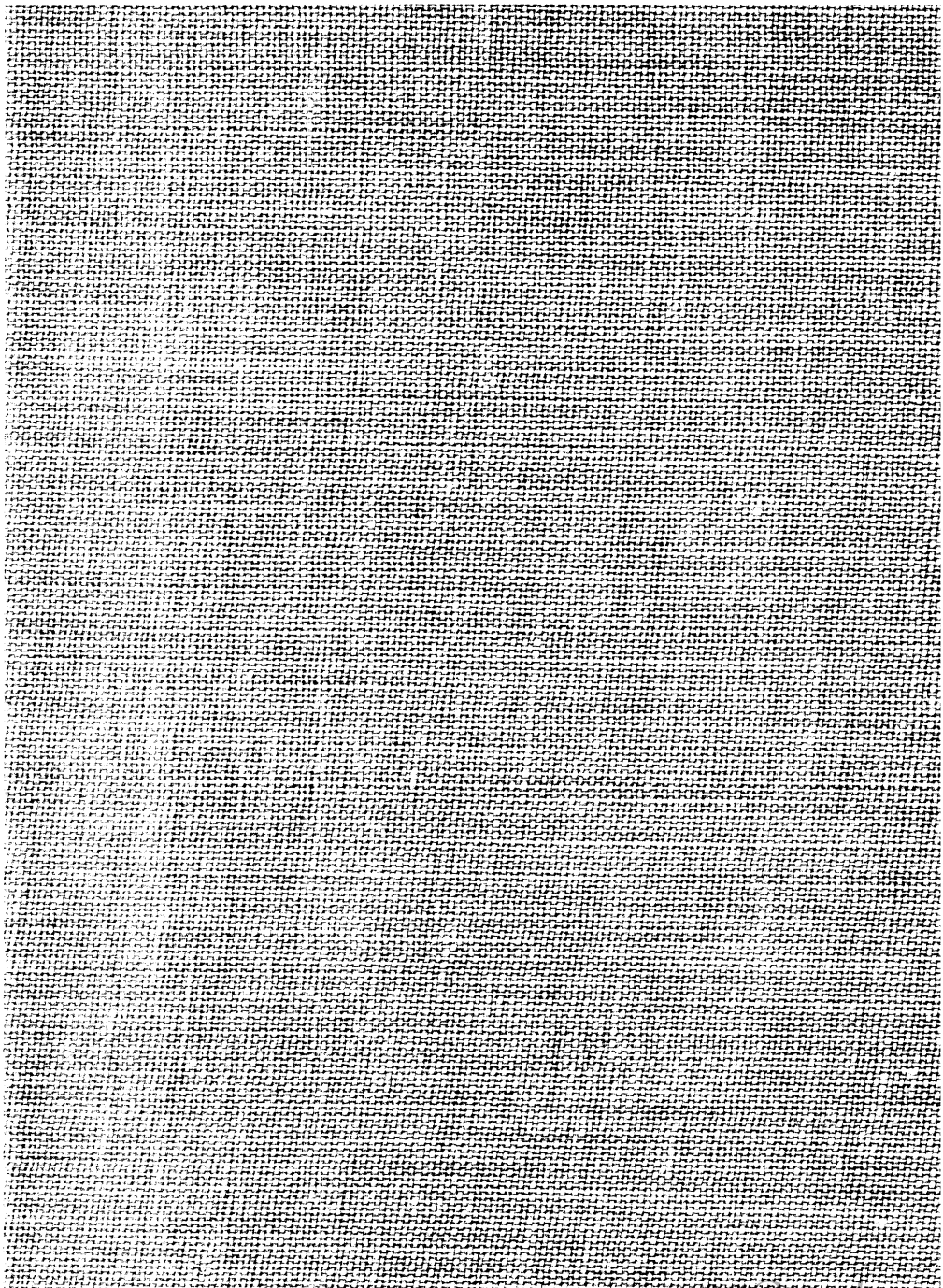
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22nd August 1844.

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DRAMATIC WORKS

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VOL. II.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

	PAGE
THE WIFE: A TALE OF MANTUA	1
THE BEGGAR OF BETHNAL GREEN	73
THE DAUGHTER	141
THE LOVE-CHASE	209
WOMAN'S WIT; OR, LOVE'S DISGUISES	277

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THE WIFE:

A TALE OF MANTUA.

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TO

CAPTAIN THOMAS BLAIR,

(OF THE HON. COMPANY'S SHIP WILLIAM FAIRLIE.)

My dear Captain Blair,

You would be angry with me were I to tell the world my reasons for dedicating this Play to you.

I keep them, therefore, to myself:—leaving them to be imagined by those who love to depict friendship in its most munificent and disinterested aspect, and simply subscribe myself,

Your attached and faithful servant,

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

1833.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN, IN 1833.)

Mariana	MISS ELLEN TREE.
Floribel	MISS SYDNEY.
Leonardo Gonzaga, Princes of Mantua	MR. C. KEAN.
Ferrardo Gonzaga, Princes of Mantua	MR. WARDE.
Count Florio	MR. DIDDEAR.
Julian St. Pierre	MR. SHERIDAN KNOWLES.
Antonio, a Curate	MR. G. BENNETT.
Lorenzo, an Advocate of Rome	MR. ABBOTT.
Hugo, Guardian to Mariana	MR. RANSFORD.
Bartolo	MR. MEADOWS.
Bernardo	MR. TURNOUR.
Carlo	MR. BARNES.
Marco	MR. HENRY.
Pietro	MR. PAYNE.
Stephano	MR. J. COOPER.
First Lord	MR. IRWIN.
Advocate of Mantua	MR. HAINES.
First Officer	MR. T. MATTHEWS.
Second Officer	MR. MEARS.
Courier	MR. HEATH.

SCENE—MANTUA;—AFTERWARDS THE CAMP.

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PROLOGUE,

Spoken by Mr. Warde.

UNTOWARD fate no luckless wight invades
More sorely than the Man who drives *two trades*:
Like Esop's bat, between two natures placed,
Scowl'd at by *mice*, among the *birds* disgraced.
Our author thus, of twofold fame exactor,
Is doubly scouted,—both as Bard, and Actor!
Wanting in haste a Prologue, he applied
To three poetic friends; was thrice denied.
Each glared on him with supercilious glance,
As on a Poor Relation met by chance;
And one was heard, with more repulsive air,
To mutter "Vagabond," "Rogue," "Strolling Player!"
A poet once, he found—and look'd aghast—
By turning actor, he had lost his *caste*,
The verse patch'd up at length—with like ill fortune
His friends behind the scenes he did importune
To speak his lines. He found them all fight shy,
Nodding their heads in cool civility.
"Their service in the Drama was enough,
The poet might recite the poet's stuff!"
The rogues—they like him hugely—but it stung 'em.
Somehow—to think a Bard had got among 'em.
Their mind made up—no earthly pleading shook it,
In pure compassion till I undertook it,
Disown'd by Poets, and by Actors too,
Dear Patrons of both arts, he turns to you!
If in your hearts some tender feelings dwell
From sweet VIRGINIA, or heroic TELL:
If in the scenes which follow you can trace
What once has pleased you—an unbidden grace—
A touch of nature's work—an awkward start
Or ebullition of an Irish heart—
Cry, clap, commend it! If you like them not,
Your former favours cannot be forgot.
Condemn them—damn them—hiss them if you will—
Their author is your grateful servant still!

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THE WIFE:

A TALE OF MANTUA.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Mantua.*

Enter LEONARDO GONZAGA *and* LORENZO.

Leon. So, in my native city, thanks to heaven,
Ten years and more elapsed, I stand again!
A boy it sent me forth, takes back a man.
Hail to it! 'Tis mine old acquaintance still,
In nothing strange—unalter'd! To a stone
The same I left it! Glad am I to see it—
None better loves its venerable face!

Lor. I'm glad to see you smile.

Leon. I do so, signor.
I am a boy again! The days come back
When smallest things made wealth of happiness
And ever were at hand! when I did watch
With panting heart the striking of the clock,
Which hardly sounded ere the book was shut.
Then for the race—the leap—the game—O, signor,
The vigour and endurance of such joy!
Is't e'er to come again? And care so light,
That, looking back, you smile you thought it care,
And call it part of pleasure! I'm again
In Mantua!

Lor. Then here we say farewell,

Leon. Not so; acquaintance, born and nurtured in
Adversity, is worth the cherishing:

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'Tis proved steel which one may trust one's life to.
You are a stranger here in Mantua.
Which I am native to. What brings you hither?
If 'tis a cause no scruple of just weight
Forbids thee to unfold, unbosom thee,
And in return for what thou part'st with, take
The zeal and honour of a hearty friend,
And service too, to boot;—you pause, from doubt
Either of my ability or faith.
If this, I'm sorry for't—If that, take heed.
You know not by the eye the practised limb
Where the inform'd and active sinew lies,
That's equal to the feat. What, silent still?
'Sdeath, man! a dwarf is not to be despised,
For he may have a giant for his friend,
And so be master of a giant's strength.
Come, come, have confidence;—'tis the free rein
Which takes the willing courser o'er the leap
He'd miss if you did check him!

Lor. There are men
Whose habits in abeyance hold their natures
Which still remain themselves.—Your temperament
Is of the sanguine kind,—and so is mine,
But lo, the difference! Thy frankness brooks
No pause—thy wish is scarce conceived ere told—
As if men's hearts were open as their looks,
And trust were due to all. The law hath been
My study, signor; and, these three years past,
My practice too; and it hath taught me this:—
To doubt, with openness to be convinced,
Is to remain on this side danger, yet
No fraction lack of generosity
Which it becomes a noble mind to cherish.

Leon. And doubt you me?

Lor. No, signor; but drew back,
When you with instant promptness did advance
Where I, with all the heart to take the step,
Had still, I fear, been standing. You shall know
My errand hither. I am nephew—

Leon. Stop
Till these pass on!

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Enter BARTOLO, CARLO, BERNARDO, *and others.*

Carlo. Will not the duke postpone the cause?

Bar. I tell thee no.

Carlo. And wherefore?

Bar. What's that to thee?—Is not he the duke?—Shall such a piece of flesh and bone as thou art, question the duke?

Carlo. Why not?

Bar. Why not? Would any one believe he had been born in Mantua? Now mark how I will answer him! Dost thou drink Burgundy?

Carlo. No, but water.

Bar. Then art thou, compared to the great duke, what water is to Burgundy.

Carlo. He is but flesh and blood.

Bar. But what kind of flesh and blood? Answer me that! Would'st thou that dinest upon garlic and coarse bread, and washest them down with water, compare thyself to one who sits down every day of the week to a table of three courses? Thou art no more than a head of garlic to the duke!

Ber. Say on, Bartolo! Well! The duke refuses to postpone the cause; and what then?

Bar. Why then the case must come on.

Ber. And what will be the end on't?

Bar. That knows the duke.

Carlo. But what ought it to be?

Bar. What the great duke wills.

Carlo. Why so?

Bar. Because that must be.

Ber. She was a bold girl, when they forced her to the church, to refuse to give her hand there, and claim the protection of the curate.

Bar. He was a bolder man to have anything to say to so mettlesome a piece of stuff.

Carlo. And to refuse a count!

Bar. Her cause will not thrive the better for that, unless, indeed, the duke be wroth with the count, for honourably affecting a commissary's ward.

Leon. [*Aside.*] You seem intent on their discourse?

Lor. [*Aside.*] I am so.

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Ber. You saw her, Bartolo, did you not?

Bar. Yes, I was passing by when they were forcing her into the church, and followed them in.

Carlo. Is she as handsome as they say?

Bar. Humph!—handsome!—handsome is this, and handsome is that. I could sooner tell the absence of beauty than the presence of it. Now thou art not beautiful, but dress thee like a duke, and it might change thee. Thou that art an ugly craftsman, might become a beautiful duke. Notwithstanding I think I dare pronounce her handsome—very handsome! nay, I will go further, and confess that, were she a countess, or duchess, I would call her the most beautiful woman in Mantua.

Ber. But why wishes the curate to have the cause postponed?

Bar. To wait for a learned doctor of the law, for whom he has sent to Rome, but who has not yet arrived, though hourly looked for.

Carlo. What! must one send for law to Rome?

Bar. Yes, if one cannot find it in Mantua.

Carlo. Cannot one find law in Mantua?

Bar. Not if it be all bought up. There's not a legal man of note whom the count has not retained; so was the curate forced to send for his nephew to Rome—a man, it is reported, of great learning, and of profound skill in his profession, though hardly yet out of his nonage.

Leon. [*Aside.*] You colour, signor! 'tis of you he speaks.

Carlo. Fears he to come to Mantua, or what?

Bar. 'Tis thought the brigands have detained him—a plague upon the rascals! A word in your ears, signors. You all know that Bartolo is a loyal man?

All. We do, Bartolo.

Bar. Said I ever a word against the duke?

All. No.

Bar. You are right, signors: nor would I, though the duke were to hang every honest man in Mantua, for is he not the duke?—and is not Bartolo a loyal man! Now if I speak of the duke's cousin, whom the

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brigands, they say, have killed, speak I against the Duke?

All. No!

Bar. Is't treason to say "a pity that he was killed"?

All. No!

Bar. Ah, signors, had he succeeded his father, he would have made a proper duke. Is this saying anything against his cousin that is the duke?

All. No!

Bar. I warrant me, no! Catch Bartolo talking treason! Who says a word against the duke? He dies, as Bartolo is a loyal man. But fare you well, signors. The trial comes on at noon—and noon will soon be here.

Ber. We go your way.

Bar. Come on, then. Remember I said not a word against the duke. [BARTOLO *and others go out.*

Leon. Of you he spoke—was it not so?

Lor. It was.

Leon. You come to Mantua to plead the cause
Of this fair damsel. You were here before,
But that the brigands intercepted you,—
Your hurt, but my advantage, whose escape,
Long time their captive, you contrived. And now,
To prove my friendship more than wordy vaunting:—
I have the power to serve you. Take me with you.
Your clerk, you said, opposing vain resistance
The hot-brained robber slew. Suppose me him:
I have a smattering of his vocation,
A notion of the mystery of yours;
And I would hear, by their own lips recited,
This worthy priest and beauteous damsel's cause,
For reasons which—you smile.

Lor. A thought did cross me.

Leon. I know thy thought—'tis wrong!—'Tis not the heat
Of youthful blood which prompts—you smile again.

Lor. Your pardon.—If I did, you have to thank
The quickness of your apprehension.

Leon. Mark me!—
I have loved my last—and that love was my first!
A passion like a seedling that did spring,

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Whose germ the winds had set; of stem so fine,
And leaf so small, to inexperienced sight
It pass'd for nought,—until, with swelling trunk,
And spreading branches, bowing all around,
It stood a goodly tree! Are you content?
This was my sadness, signor, which the sight
Of my dear native city banished;
Which thy misgiving hath brought back again;
And which will be the clothing of my heart,
While my heart calls this breast of mine its house.

Lor. I pray you, pardon me!

Leon. I pray you, peace!
Time presses.—Once again, have confidence,
And take me with you to your uncle's home.
More than you credit me, I may bestead you.
Wilt take my hand?

Lor. I will!

Leon. Have with you, then! [*They go out.*

SCENE II.—*Antonio's House.*

Enter ANTONIO *and* PIETRO.

Ant. What lacks it now of noon?

Piet. An hour or more.

Ant. No chance of his arrival!—This delay
Perplexes me! Is it neglect?—I thought
His answer would have been his presence here,
Prompt as my summons; yet he neither comes
Nor sends excuse. 'Tis very strange! She holds
The same sedate and lofty carriage still?

Piet. She does, and native seems it to the maid
As her fair brow, wherefrom it calmly looks,
As from its custom'd and assured seat:
A gentleness that smiles without a smile:
For 'tis the sweetness, not of any part,
But all—look, speech, and act,—delights the heart
That's near her. Silence is her humour; yet
She never shuns discourse; while what she says
Hath one unwearied constant burden still,
A blessing on your reverence.

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Ant. Poor girl!
She owes me nought. Why do I serve my master,
If not to do his bidding? Is it but
To hold the crook? Nay, but to use the crook!
To be, indeed, the shepherd of the flock—
Wakeful and watchful—pitiful and faithful—
My charitable life, and not my name,
The badge and warrant of my sacred calling!
She was afflicted, persecuted, and
I succour'd her!—I, standing at the altar!
Beneath my master's roof! His livery,
Blazon'd, as ne'er was earthly king's, upon me!
What could I less?

Piet. Fails he to come, for whom
Your reverence looks, to plead the damsel's cause,
Must it perforce go on?

Ant. It must; and I
Myself will be her advocate, before
The haughty duke. For problems of deep law,
Will give him axioms of plain truth, and paint
Her thrilling grievance to the life with tears,—
Which, Pity seeing, shall to every heart
That owns her gentle influence, commend,
And gather tears to aid them.

Enter STEPHANO.

Ste. May it please you,
Two strangers, craving audience, wait below.

Ant. Admit them! 'Tis my nephew! Worthy Pietro,
Have all in readiness that we appear
Before the duke when cited. [PIETRO *goes out.*

Enter LEONARDO GONZAGA *and* LORENZO.

So, Lorenzo!

Lor. Save you, my reverend uncle!

Ant. Now a week
I've looked for you—but waive we explanations.
Thou'rt come:—and to the business that has brought thee:—
I have possess'd thee of the damsel's cause
In all its bearings—art prepared to plead it?

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Lor. I am, so please your reverence;—but, with us,
That evidence is best which is direct.
That the Count Florio seeks the damsel's hand,—
That wills her guardian she should give it him,—
That she resists her uncle and the count,—
I know, but not the cause of her dissent.
Children to guardians do obedience owe;
A match so lofty warrants some enforcement,
Which, not on slight grounds, should the maid resist.
Ant. Ground know I none, save strong aversion.
Lor. Pray you
Vouchsafe us conference with the maid herself:
Her deposition shall this gentleman
That's come with me—my trusty clerk—set down.
Ant. I'll bring her to you;—but, I charge you, boy,
You keep in mind you are her advocate.
For she, indeed, of those rare things of earth,
Which of the debt that's due to it, rob Heaven,
That men set earth before it, is the rarest!
Then guard thee, nephew!—rather with thine ears
And tongue discourse with her, than with thine eyes,
Lest thou forget it was her cause, not she,
That summon'd thee to Mantua!
Lor. Fear me not! [ANTONIO *goes out.*
Leon. A service of some danger, it should seem,
Your reverend uncle has engaged you in;
And, by his pardon, for your safety, takes
Means which your peril rather do enhance.
The soldier that is taught to fear his foe,
Is half o'ercome before he takes the field.
Lor. Is't from your own misgivings you doubt me!
Leon. No:—as I said before, my heart is safe—
Love proof, with love! which, if it be not, signor,
A passion that can only once be felt—
Hath but one object—lives and dies with us—
And, while it lives, remains itself, while all
Attachments else keep changing—it is nothing!
I used to laugh at love and deem it fancy;
My heart would choose its mistress by mine eyes,
Whom scarce they found ere my heart sought a new one.
I knew not then the 'haviour of the soul—

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How that's the loveliness which it doth lodge,
A world beyond the loveliness of form!
I found it! when or where—for weal or woe—
It matters not! I found it! wedded it!
Never to be divorced from that true love
Which taught me what love was!
Lor. You wedded it?—
Then was your passion blest?
Leon. No, Signor, no!
Question no further, prithee! Here's your uncle!

Enter ANTONIO *and* MARIANA.

Ant. Lo, nephew! here's the maid
To answer for herself!
Lor. [*To* LEONARDO.] She's fair, indeed!
Description ne'er could give her out the thing,
One only glance avows her!—Prithee, look!
Leon. Show her to him who has not seen the fairest!
Remember, signor, Time's no gazer, but
Doth ever keep his eye upon his road,
His feet in motion;—noon is just at hand.
Lor. I thank you. Note my questions—her replies.
Your guardian—is he your relation too?
Mari. No,—would he were! That stay had needs be strong,
Which failing, we've no other left to cling to.
Leon. Oh, music!—
Lor. What's the matter?
Leon. I did hear
A bird, whose throat did beggar all the grove,
And of its rich and famed minstrel makes
A poor and common chorister!
Lor. Hear *her!*—
You'll have no ear for any other bird;
Look at her, and you'll have no ear for her,
Your tranced vision every other sense
Absorbing!—Gave you promise to the count?
Mari. None!
Lon. Nor encouragement?
Mari. Such as aversion
Gives to the thing it loathes.

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Lor. Have you a vow
Or promise to another?—that were a plea
To justify rejection. You are silent.
And yet you speak—if blushes speak, as men
Declare they do. Come, come, I know you love.
Give me to know the story of your love!
That, thereupon, I found my proper plea
To show your opposition not a thing
Of fantasy, caprice, or frowardness,
But that for which all hearers shall commend you,
Proves it the joint result of heart and reason,
Each other's act approving.—Was't in Mantua
You met?

Mari. No, signor, in my native land.

Lor. And that is—

Mari. Switzerland.

Lor. His country too?

Mari. No, signor, he belonged to Mantua.

Lor. That's right—you are collected and direct
In your replies. I dare be sworn your passion
Was such a thing, as by its neighbourhood
Made piety and virtue twice as rich
As e'er they were before. How grew it? Come,
Thou know'st thy heart—look calmly into it,
And see how innocent a thing it is
Which thou dost fear to show.—I wait your answer.
How grew your passion?

Mari. As my stature grew,
Which rose without my noting it, until
They said I was a woman. I kept watch
Beside what seem'd his death-bed. From beneath
An avalanche my father rescued him,
The sole survivor of a company
Who wander'd through our mountains. A long time
His life was doubtful, signor, and he call'd
For help, whence help alone could come, which I,
Morning and night, invoked along with him.—
So first our souls did mingle!

Lor. I perceive:—you mingled souls until you mingled hearts?
You loved at last.—Was't not the sequel, maid?

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Mari. I loved indeed! If I but nursed a flower
Which to the ground the rain and wind had beaten,
That flower of all our garden was my pride:—
What then was he to me, for whom I thought
To make a shroud, when, tending on him still
With hope, that, baffled still, did still keep up,
I saw at last the ruddy dawn of health
Begin to mantle o'er his pallid form,
And glow—and glow—till forth at last it burst
Into confirmed, broad, and glorious day!

Lor. You loved, and he did love?

Mar. To say he did,
Were to affirm what oft his eyes avouch'd,
What many an action testified—and yet—
What wanted confirmation of his tongue.
But if he loved—it brought him not content!
'Twas now abstraction—now a start—anon
A pacing to and fro—anon, a stillness,
As nought remain'd of life, save life itself,
And feeling, thought, and motion, were extinct!
Then all again was action! Disinclined
To converse, save he held it with himself;
Which oft he did, in moody vein discoursing,
And ever and anon invoking Honour,
As some high contest there were pending, 'twixt
Himself and him, wherein her aid he needed.

Lor. This spoke impediment: or he was bound
By promise to another; or had friends
Whom it behoved him to consult, and doubted;
Or 'twixt you lay disparity too wide
For love itself to leap.

Mari. I saw a struggle,
But knew not what it was.—I wonder'd still,
That what to me was all content, to him
Was all disturbance; but my turn did come.
At length he talk'd of leaving us; at length,
He fix'd the parting day—but kept it not—
O how my heart did bound!—Then first I knew
It had been sinking. Deeper still it sank
When next he fix'd to go; and sank it then
To bound no more! He went.

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Lor. To follow him,
You came to Mantua ?
Mari. What could I do ?—
Cot, garden, vineyard, rivulet, and wood,
Lake, sky, and mountain, went along with him,—
Could I remain behind ? My father found
My heart was not at home ; he loved his child,
And asked me, one day, whither we should go ?
I said, "To Mantua." I follow'd him
To Mantua ! to breathe the air he breathed,
To walk upon the ground he walk'd upon,
To look upon the things he look'd upon,
To look, perchance, on him ! perchance to hear him,
To touch him ! never to be known to him,
Till he was told, I lived and died his love.
Lor. I pray you, signor, how do you get on ?
I see you play the woman well as I,
And, sooth to say, the eye did never weep,
In which her story could not find a tear !
How get you on ? indite you word for word
As she delivers it ? How's this !—The page
As blank as first you found it !—all our pains
Have gone to lose our time.
Leon. I have a gift
Of memory, signor, which belongs to few.
What once I hear, stands as a written page
Before me ; which, if ask'd, I can repeat
True to the very letter.—You shall have
A proof of this. I have a friend or two
I fain would snatch a word with—that despatch'd
I'll meet you at the duke's, and bring with me
The damsel's story, word for word set down,
And win your full content ; or give you leave
To brand me an impostor, or aught else
A man should blush to pass for. Will you trust me ?
Lor. I will.
Leon. You may, for you shall ne'er repent you.
I'll bring you aid you little count upon. [*Aside.*]
[*Goes out.*
Ant. Nay, nephew, urge your friend to stay. A space
You have for brief refreshment : and, in sooth,

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You want it, who, from travel just alighted,
Must needs to business go.
Lor. Detain not him;
Some needful avocations call upon him.
I wait your pleasure.
Ant. Daughter, come.
Some effort has it cost to tell your story,
But profit comes of it;—your cause is strong.
Your vows, which virtually are another's,
Heaven doth itself forbid you give the count!
Is't not so, nephew?
Lor. There I'll found the plea,
Which to the conscience of the duke I'll put.
Knows he—whom, at his death (which I'm advised
Took place in Mantua) your father named
Your guardian—knows the commissary this,
Which thou hast now related?
Mari. Not that I know of.
My father's death was sudden.—Long time since
He and the commissary were acquaintance;
What pass'd between them, save the testament
Which left me ward unto the commissary,
I am a stranger to.
Lor. Since you came hither
Have you seen him, for sake of whom you came?
Mari. No!
Lor. Nor hast clue direct, or indirect,
To find him out?
Mari. No, signor.
Lor. And how long
Have you sojourn'd in Mantua?
Mari. Two years.
Lor. And is your love the same?
Mari. Am I the same?
Lor. Such constancy should win a blessing.
Ant. Yes!
And strange as 'tis, what seems to us affliction
Is oft a hand that helps us to our wish.
So may it fall with thee—if Heaven approves!

[*They go out.*

END OF ACT I.

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ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Hall of Justice in the Duke's Palace.*

On one side BARTOLO, BERNARDO, CARLO, *and others; on the other, Lords and Ladies, &c. &c.*

Bar. Silence, signors! Keep order! The parties in the cause are coming—here they are!

Enter MARIANA *leaning on* ANTONIO, *attended by* LORENZO; *after them the* COUNT FLORIO, *and various Doctors of the Law.*

Bar. That is the maiden, and that the curate upon whom she leans.

Bern. And where's the count?

Bar. Yonder, surrounded by the Doctors of the Law.

Bern. The maid is very fair.

Bar. Yes, for a burgher's daughter. Hush! The duke approaches.
The cause will straight come on.

Enter the DUKE FERRARDO GONZAGA, *and attendants.*

[*The whole assembly rise.*

Fer. Your seats! your seats! [*The assembly sit.*
Bring on this cause! Who answers for our friend,
The count?

Advo. My lord, so please you, I.

Fer. Proceed.

Advo. The question lies between the count, and this,
The guardian of the maid—whose froward act
Your highness is possess'd of—on the one side:
The maid herself, and that, the reverend man,
Who countenance doth lend unto that act,
Upon the other. Hereon founds the count
His right unto the maiden's hand. The will
And promise of her guardian, unto whom
Behoves her choice to bow—for choice herself
The maid, of right, hath none.—This were the case,
Proposed her guardian to affiance her

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To one in rank as far beneath the maid
As is the maid beneath the count. But lo
The difference! By this alliance does
She gain a consort of a rank so high
And wealth so broad, he were pretender fit
To hand of any maid in Italy!—
Such is our cause. In the first place, the right
To give away the maid: and in the next
That right exerted for her highest good.

Bar. He is a good spokesman—the duke deliberates.

Lor. My friend is lost, almost as soon as found.
He has deceived me. No! he comes at last,
And keeps indeed his promise, if he brings
Such friends as these to back us!

Enter LEONARDO GONZAGA *as Clerk to* LORENZO; *followed by several persons of distinction.*

Bar. Observe you, signors! Are not those who just now entered relatives and friends of him that were the duke, had not mishap stepped in 'twixt him and his father's seat?

Ber. They are.

Bar. Do they abet the maid? You see they take their station round her:—they are not wont of late to frequent the palace.

Ber. Peace! the duke is going to speak.

Fer. Count, on what plea claim you the maiden's hand?

Florio. Her guardian hath affianced her to me.

Fer. Speak you, her guardian,—states the count the fact?

Hugo. He does, so please your highness!

Fer. What's her age?

Hugo. She lacks a year of her majority.

Fer. Her rank?

Hugo. Her father was a burgher.

Fer. Wealth
Has she been left?

Hugo. What, charily enjoy'd,
From manual labour might, perhaps, exempt her.

Fer. And stoops the count so low to be despised—

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Rejected—spurn'd! Let the maiden be given
Back to her guardian's custody; and if
Obedience be refused, let him enforce it!
The cause is judged.
Lor. Your highness' pardon, but
The other side's to hear.
Fer. Who's he that speaks?
Lor. The counsel for the maid.
Fer. Let him be wise,
And not gainsay our pleasure.—It is told!
The cause is over—finally adjudged.
Lor. How far your highness' power extends I know!
Yet though it reach unto my life, that life
I hold to be my good, and husband not
A minute longer than it ministers
Unto mine honour's profitable use.
The duty which I should discharge in vain,—
Not through its own demerit, but defect
In him whose will availeth more than right,—
I leave undone:—but 'gainst the power protest
Which makes me—servant unto justice—slave
Unto oppression. For the pangs that wring
That maiden's heart, be answerable thou,
Not I!
Ant. Your highness—
Fer. Peace! I will not hear thee, father!
Ant. Then Heaven will hear me! I do call on it
For judgment on the man who wrongs this maid!
And sure as I do call 'twill answer me,—
And speak to thee—be thou that wicked man—
When power thou hast no longer to cry "Peace!"
Fer. That wicked man!
Ant. O, poverty of earth—
That men do deeds which win them evil names,
And spurn the names, but not the deeds which win them!
What truth instructeth me shall I not speak?
Suffer'd the maid from any violence
Should he not die? What callest thou the deed
Which would condemn her to a loathed bed?
Think'st thou there's virtue in constrained vows,

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Half-utter'd—soulless—falter'd forth in fear,
To purge the nauseousness of such a deed,
That Heaven won't smell the damning odour on't?
And if there is, then truth and grace are nought!
Then sanctity is nought! yea, Heaven itself!
And in its empyrëal essence lies
No savour of its sweetness!

Fer. Peace, I say!

Ant. Thou canst not bid the thunder hold its peace—
Why criest thou peace to me?—Nay, bid me speak—
That thou may'st bear to hear the thunder speak—
The herald, earth-accredited of Heaven—
Which when men hear, they think upon Heaven's King,
And run the items o'er of the account
To which he's sure to call them.

Fer. Dread my power!

Ant. Dread thou the power from which thou hold'st thy power!

Proud man, I brave thee where thou sit'st, and in
The ear of earth and heaven denounce the sentence
Which gives that injured maid to violence!

Fer. I'll hear no more!—The cause is judged—the maid
Her rightful guardian take!

Mari. [*Advancing to centre.*] And if he does
He takes a corse! Lo! death is at my lips;
[*Taking a small phial from her bosom.*
The hand or foot that offers to approach,
Commits a murder! In this phial bides
The bane of fifty lives! pass but a drop,
Were now the sexton told to dig my grave,
Were now his foot upon the shovel set,
Ere he began, I should be ready for it!
Who stirs? Lo, here I sink upon my knee!
Or let the count his hateful suit forego,
Or let my guardian his consent revoke,
Or let the duke recall his foul decree,
Or hence, by mine own limbs, I never rise!

Fer. Why to the count this strong repugnance, girl?

Mari. Give thou the oath that none shall stir, I'll speak.

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Fer. I give it thee.
Mari. I am a maid betrothed!
All but the rites, a wife! A wedded heart
Although unwedded hand! Reflect on that!
Making me give my hand unto the count,
You make me give what is another's right:—
Constraining me to an unrighteous act,
Contenting him where it is base to wish,
And doing violence to Heaven itself,
Which curses lips that move 'gainst consciences!
Fer. Lives he of whom you speak in Mantua?
Mari. In Mantua, he told me he did live.
Fer. What! know you not the place of his sojourn?
Mari. Yes! where he still sojourns where'er he is!
Fer. What place is that?
Mari. My heart! Though travels he
By land or sea—though I'm in Mantua,
And he as distant as the pole away—
I look but into that and there he is,
Its king enthroned, with every thought, wish, will,
In waiting at his feet!
Fer. This is the mood,
The fantasy of girlhood! Do we hold
Our power of sufferance of a baby-maid,
Who mocks us with a threat she durst not keep!
Secure her!
Mari. Lo, the phial's at my lips!
Let him who would do a murder, do it!
Had he a thousand hands to wait upon thee,
The slightest movement of this little one,
Would make them useless all!
Leon. My Mariana!
Fer. She has dropp'd the phial.
Leon. [*Coming forward.*] Stir not, on your lives!
My Mariana!
Mari. 'Tis he!
Leon. It is, my love!
'Tis he who won thy heart, not seeking it!
'Tis he whose heart thou won'st, not knowing it!
Who saw thee rich in all but fortune's gifts,
And—servant unto men, though lord of them—

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Balanced their poor esteem against thy wealth,
Which fortune could not match! Accountable
To others, never I reveal'd the love,
I did not see the way for thee to bless,
As only thou wouldst bless it! Now that way
Is clear! Is open! lies before my sight,
Without impediment, or anything
Which, with the will, I cannot overleap!
And now, my love before! my love till now!
And still my love!—now, now, I call thee wife
And wed thee here—here—here—in Mantua!

Fer. Remove that slave who knows not where he is!

Leon. Descend, great duke, who know'st not where

Fer. Where do I sit? [thou sit'st!

Leon. Why in thy cousin's seat!

Fer. He's dead!

Leon. He's not! He lives, and claims his seat,
Back'd by his kinsmen, friends, and every one
That owns a loyal heart in Mantua!
[*Throws off his gown.*
Do you not know me, cousin?

Fer. Leonardo!

Leon. Six years have we been strangers, but I see
You know my father's face, if not your cousin's.

Fer. I do, and yield to you that father's seat.

Leon. Cousin, the promptness of your abdication
Invests it with a grace to which we bow.
We'll spare your sight the pain of our accession,
And pray that with the parties in this cause—
(I mean the count and guardian of the maid)
You now withdraw, and at your former mansion,
Wait intimation of our further pleasure.
I would not have you speak, so please you, now;
When we confer, it must be privily.
Yet out of honour to our common blood,
Well as in pledge of no unkind intent,
Your hand before you go! [*They shake hands.*

Fer. Nay, let me speak
At least my thanks, your highness, and my welcome—
Before I take my leave.

[Ferrardo, Florio, *and* Hugo, *go out.*

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Ant. Rise, signors, rise!
Live, Leonardo, Duke of Mantua!
Leon. We thank you, friends! This welcome is of the heart.
For you we take this seat. Thou reverend man,
Be confessor unto the Duke of Mantua:
Thou man of law and honour, be his friend,
And advocate of state: and both of you
Lead hither that abstracted maid! But no!
That office should be mine. [*Descends.*] In Italy
Shines there a brow on which my coronet
Could find so proud a seat? My Mariana,
Wilt be my bride? Nay, do not tax thy tongue
With that, thy looks have scarce the power to speak!
Come!—share my seat with me! Come, Mariana!
The consort of the Duke of Mantua!
[*She faints in his arms as the scene closes.*

SCENE II.—*A Room in the Palace.*

Enter Cosmo *and* Courier.

Cos. The duke? which duke? I know not which; we have had two within the last ten minutes; I know not which Duke it is thou wantest.

Cour. I tell thee, the Duke of Mantua.

Cos. Is thy business public or private?

Cour. Dost thou not see I come from Rome? There are great matters on foot, which it behoves the duke to know; and herein, if I mistake not, he is apprised of them.

Cos. Nay, then, thy business is public, and of course concerns the reigning duke.

Cour. Of course it does.

Cos. I'll bring thee to him.

Cour. Lead on!

Enter Bartolo, Bernardo, *and* Marco, *meeting them.*

Bar. Signor Cosmo!

Cos. Don't stop me, Signor Bartolo. I'm in haste.

Bar. Nay, a word—only a word. Who is that?

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Cos. A courier from Rome.

Bar. I was right, Bernardo. Save you, signor. You come, I hear, from Rome. How are they all at Rome?

Cour. Well, signor—all that I am acquainted with.

Bar. They have a great deal of news in Rome.

Cour. Sufficient, signor.

Bar. One likes to hear the news.

Cour. I trouble myself little about it.

Bar. That is because 'tis your vocation to hear it. Nobody is in love with his vocation. Now 'tis the reverse with me. I mind the news as much as I mind my meals. Pray you, signor, have mercy upon a hungry man, and tell me the news from Rome.

Cour. Great news, signor,—there is going to be a war.

Bar. A war! A war, Bernardo—Cosmo:—and pray you, signor, with what power are they going to war?

Cour. With the French.

Bar. The devil!

Cour. You will have a fine opportunity for showing your valour, signor.

Bar. I thank you, signor. I was never an ostentatious man, I am content to be a man of valour—I don't care to show it; but I thank you for the news. Come along, Bernardo—Carlo. A war, signors, a war! What a glorious thing is a war! There's news!

[*They go out severally.*

SCENE III.—*The Vestibule before the Ducal Palace.*

Enter St. Pierre.

St. P. Here be my seat upon the palace steps,
Although they hang me from the portico!—
Have a heart, Poverty, thou hast nought to lose,—
Nor land, nor mansion, nor habiliments,
That thou shouldst play the craven! That thou call'st
Thy life—what is it?—Hunger!—Nakedness!

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A lodging 'neath the eaves! ten scornful looks
For one of pity; and that one a proof
That thou'rt an anguish to the aching sight!
Then what carest thou for cuffs? Nay, cuff again,
That they may fall the heavier!—satisfied
That he who brains thee, does thee, Poverty,
A thousand times the good, he does thee ill!—
Come—keep the portal of the mighty duke
Who made thee what thou art; nor let him pass
Till from his fear thou wring'st an alms, or else
A quick release obtainest from his wrath!
Fer. [*Without.*] Be sure thou keep'st the hour.
St. P. Talk of the fiend,
They say, and here he comes! here comes the duke.
Fer. [*Entering*]. Hoa! clear the vestibule!
St. P. Great duke, descend!
No retinue doth stop your gracious way!
Here is no throng,—for poverty sits here
Craving a foot of your fair palace steps,
For lack of better resting-place.
Fer. Who are you?
What do you here!
St. P. Wait, mighty duke, an alms!
I could not ask the humble craftsman one,
I used to cuff him;—nor the tradesman one,
I used to make him doff his cap to me;—
Nor yet the merchant one, he gave me way,
Or I gave him my shoulder;—nor the courtier,
My hilt I handled soon as he touch'd his;—
In brief, I pass'd by all degrees of men,
To beg an alms of the most gracious duke!
Fer. Here!
St. P. What! a florin? give it to the street,
For the abased eye of vagrantry.
I make no livelihood of raggedness!
Fer. Scorn'st thou my gift?
St. P. Thy gift and thee, great duke!
Nay, frown not! choler doth disturb digestion,
And that would mar thy afternoon's repast;
Leave wrath to me, who have not tasted food
Since Wednesday last,—nor look for meal to-day.

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Fer. Why that would buy thee five!
St. P. What were five meals—
To starve anew! I should not light on thee
A second time to beg another alms!
Thou wouldst take care to shun me! better starve
Outright,—for, saving thee, most gracious duke,
There's not a man in Mantua I'd stoop
To ask a ducat of.
Fer. Well, there's a ducat.
St. P. It will not do.
Fer. What hoa there!
St. P. Softly, duke!
Hush! better far that we confer alone,
For thy sake! mark!—for thy sake, gracious duke!
Fer. What means the villain?
St. P. Right, duke, that's my name!
What do I mean? I'll tell thee what I mean.
My wardrobe wants replenishing; if puffs
The wind, my hat is like to lose its crown;
My robe is all the covering I have;
My shoes are minus nearly half the soles;
And then I fain would change my lodgings, duke,
Which, sooth to say, is e'en the open street—
Less spacious would content me; last of all
I would be master of a larder, duke,
Would serve me, at the shortest, good a month,
That I might live so long at ease, and see
If aught turn'd up would make it worth my while
To shake a hand with the fair world again,
And live on terms with it.—Most gracious duke,
Give me a hundred ducats!
Fer. Dost thou think
To rob me at the palace gates!
St. P. Who robs
Provides him weapons. I have none, great duke,
Nor pistol, rapier, poniard,—not a knife:
I parted with them one by one for food.
For weeks have they been provender to me!
Think upon that, great duke, that at a meal
Spend'st twenty times their product, and, so please you,
Give me a hundred ducats.

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Fer. Thou art mad!
St. P. No, by St. Jago! try me! I have the use
Of my wits. I'll neither leap into a flood,
Nor run into a fire! I do know
The day of the week, the month of the year, the year;
I'll tell you which are fast days, which are not;
But that's no wonder,—I have kept so many.
To balance this, I'll tell you feast days too!
I'll write and cipher for you;—finally,
I'll give you all the fractions and their sums,
Lie in a hundred ducats!

Servants enter from the Palace.

Fer. Seize him!
St. P. Stop
Till you have learn'd my name! Imports you much
To know it! 'tis affix'd, most gracious duke,
To certain documents which only wait
Your leave to see the light.
Fer. What documents?
St. P. Shall these o'erhear, or private be our speech?
Fer. [*To Servants.*] You may withdraw a pace or
St. P. You see, [two.
Great duke, I am not mad.
Fer. What documents?
St. P. One memorandum for a hundred crowns,
For whipping one that did offend your grace:—
I paid me with the pleasure of the task,
Nor ask'd the hire, but kept the document.
Another, for enticing to a haunt
Of interdicted play, a wealthy heir:
I scorn'd the hire for that,—though shame to say it,
I did not scorn to earn it—but I kept
The document.—A third—
Fer. Enough—St. Pierre!
St. P. Aha! you know me now?
Fer. How changed thou art,—
I ne'er had known thee!
St. P. It were strange if want
Look'd like abundance—which was never yet
Akin to it.

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Fer. Here take my purse!
St. P. 'Tis rich—
Holds it a hundred ducats?
Fer. Twice the sum—
I want thee—that suffice.
St. P. That does suffice!
Fer. Get thee habiliments more rich than these,—
Appointments, too, fit to consort with them;
And come thou to mine ancient mansion straight.
St. P. I must dine first.
Fer. Eat sparingly.
St. P. Indeed!
I see thou want'st me then.—I'll go and dine.
Fer. Thy tears are not a pledge for continence.
St. P. I'll dine upon a crust! Nay, fear me not—
What time am I to take in all?—two hours?
Fer. The half might serve thee.
St. P. Well; we'll say the half,—
The quarter shall suffice me, if thou wilt!
Fer. Make it as brief as may be.
St. P. Work that's sweet
Is quickly done.—I'll come in half an hour. [*Goes out.*
Fer. That which had been my bane an hour ago
Is now my medicine! This fellow owns
A quick and subtle wit; a reckless daring;
And hath a winning tongue withal and 'haviour;
Easy of conscience too—yet still contrived
To keep some credit with the court. I know
The use of him; he has been mine, and mine
He needs must be again. So!—Suddenly
He quitted Mantua, and left with none
A clue to find the cause,—nor lack'd he then
Wardrobe or ducat; misery has changed him;—
Her work abundance quickly shall undo!
I know the use of him, and I will use him.

Enter COUNT FLORIO.

Now, count, what brings you hither?
Florio. News, my lord,
Ensures my welcome! A brief honeymoon
Hath fate decreed your cousin: scarce he takes

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The seat were fitter yours, and weds his bride,
Ere comes advice the states must take the field
Against the power of France.
Fer. Good news, indeed!
Florio. Forthwith he hies to Rome—
Fer. Most welcome news!
Florio. And by entreaty of his council, you—
As next in rank and lineage—are appointed
Our regent in his absence.
Fer. That's the best news.
Florio. His heart, that was against you, softened
By prosperity, or by your ready yielding,
Or giving way to the sudden exigence,—
He offers reconcilement by your friends,
And straight you are invited to his presence.
Fer. I come! great news—I thank you—glorious news! [*They go out.*

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Palace.*

Enter FERRARDO *and* FLORIO.

Fer. Another victory!
Florio. So the rumour runs.
Fer. Why fortune plays the minion to him! Does
His wish not only, but anticipates it!
Chief after chief she thrusts aside, that he
May head the war, and, when he takes the lead,
Her moody favour, wavering before—
Alternate sun and cloud—shines fully forth
With strong and steady beam.—Have many fallen?
Florio. A host, 'tis said, on either side.
Fer. No wound,
No hurt for him?
Florio. 'Tis so reported.

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Fer. Ha!
Florio. Though twice he changed his charger—one disabled,
The second wounded mortally!
Fer. And he
As safe as sittting in his ducal chair!
Why dangers, that are thorns to other men,
For him do change to flowers!
Florio. The duchess still
Persists in her seclusion.
Fer. There again
I'm baffled! would she mingle with the court,
I'd make for him the home of peace what fails
The field of war to prove. I know my cousin,—
For boyhood, thoughtless, often shows the man
Which manhood, wary, hides. A sense he has,
That's sickly tender to the touch of shame.
I have seen him, at a slight imputed fault
Colour to flame—anon grow ashy pale—
The dew in drops upon his forehead starting,—
His tongue without its use—his mouth agape—
His universal frame vacuity
Of action and of power,—and anon
The glare and din, and tossing of the tempest!
To wound his honour to the quick, would be
To sting his core of life!
Florio. Thou couldst not hope
To wound it through his wife—whose love for him,
Gives, in his absence, all things to neglect!
Her bounding palfrey cannot woo her forth;
The palace vibrates with the dance, and still
She keeps her lonely cell. You talk to her
Of plays and shows—a statue lists to you:
She visits no one—no one she receives.
What chance of practising upon a wife,
Who, for an only absent lord, observes
A sterner widowhood, than many hold
In honour of a dead one!—why do you smile?
Fer. To think, to what account a little art
Might turn a little swerving, in a case
Of self-denial, carried thus like hers

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To the admired extreme! I would St. Pierre
Had kept his restless spirit more in check,
Paid to my will submission, as he used,
And not enlisted in my cousin's train,
But stopp'd in Mantua! My plans were laid,
Were sure, and long ere this had been matured,
But for his wilfulness.

Florio. Of what avail
Had been his presence here?

Fer. I should have found
A use for him. Ne'er knew I yet the ear
He could not keep a hold of, once he caught it.
That fellow with his tongue has won more hearts
Than any twenty men in Mantua,
With tongues, and forms, and faces! I had contrived
To throw him in her way.

Florio. There were no chance—

Fer. I know,—but I could make appearances
Supply the place of facts—especially
In her husband's absence—so that confidence
Itself would construe guilt where no guilt was!
So would I show her to the eyes of all,
That, though she were the snow itself, new fallen,
Men would believe her spotted!

Florio. If 'tis true
That he was charged with the despatches hither
Of this new victory—

Fer. Saint Pierre?

Florio. Saint Pierre.

Fer. 'Tis so reported?

Florio. 'Tis.

Fer. Then, proves it true,
Before he is an hour in Mantua
He must be stripp'd of every ducat! Mind,
Of that must thou take care! [*Shouts.*]
What mean those shouts?

Florio. They herald, doubtless, the approach of him,
That's bearer of the news.

Fer. If 'tis Saint Pierre,
The moment he alights, away with him
To a house of play—you are his master—haste!

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Your signal he will answer readily,
As doth the bird of game his challenger!
Florio. I'll do my best. [*Goes out.*
Fer. So do.—The confessor!
The cards come round to me! A score to one,
I hold the winning hand.—His reverence,
I have contrived to make at last my friend.
Your churchman dearly loves a convertite.
And he believes me his. A kindly man,
But, once resolved, to error positive:—
And, from his calling, credulous to weakness,
Touching the proneness of the flesh to sin—
I have well consider'd him.

Enter ANTONIO.

Your blessing, father.
Ant. Thou hast it, son.
Fer. Whence come you now? No doubt
From the performance of some pious deed—
The shriving of some sin-oppressed soul—
The soothing of some sorrow-stricken heart—
Or sweet relieving of some needy child
Of merciless adversity.
Ant. No, my son,—
But from a trespasser that's yet unshriven;
A daughter who has swerved, and on whose soul
I had thought as soon to find the soil of sin
As tarnish upon new-refined gold!
A wife, who in the absence of her lord,
Lived like thy cousin's wife; with means to bless
Desires incontinent; a miracle
Of self-secluded, lonely chastity.
Fer. He comes in the very vein! You spoke just now
Of my cousin's wife. There's news of my dear cousin,
And, with submission, I would recommend
Her grace to show herself to day. Methinks,
If only for her health, she keeps herself
Too much alone.
Ant. So have I told her grace.
Fer. Indeed! I marvel that she perseveres
In the face of your admonishment! More strict

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Would she be thought, than you, a holy man
Would counsel her to be? Forgive me, father,
If 'tis uncharitable in me, but
I never loved extremes! Your constant weather
Is still the moderate, father. Storms and calms
Are brief.
Ant. You are right, my son.
Fer. I had been pleased
Less had she shown her fondness for her lord.
Love, of its own fidelity assured,
Ne'er studies the display on't!
Ant. Nay—she loves
Her lord.
Fer. And yet 'tis the predicament
Of love to wane upon possession. Where
I see much guard, I ever do infer
Some doubt; I do not mean deliberate—
Instinctive only. Passion is passion, father,
Earth, which the nigher we draw to Heaven, the more
We cast away.
Ant. You reason well, my son.
Fer. I would not have you think I doubt her Grace!
Yet had she more confided in herself,
Lived like herself—appeared among the court—
Courteous to all—particular to none,
Save those to whom, next to her lord, she owes
Her highest duty—my reliance on her
Were stronger! Is't uncharitable, father,
To say so?—speak, and frankly—Wherefore else
Put I my heart into your saintly hands?
Ant. Nay, son—I think you speak in charity
As one who blames through love. We'll see the duchess,
And jointly recommend to her a life
Of less severe restraint.
Fer. I thank your reverence!
You know I owe her grace some small amends,
And trust me, father, gladly would I make them!

[*Exeunt.*

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SCENE II.—*Ante-Room to the Chamber of the Duchess —A Window overlooking the Street.*

Enter FLORIBEL.

Flo. A merry life for twenty-one to lead,
And in a woman too! from morn till night
Mew'd in a lonely tower! Heigho! It is
My lady's will. I would she had been born
In Mantua, where wives their husbands love
In reason! Well!—We'll live in hope she'll learn
In time. I used to lead a dozen kinds
Of life in a day!—Now, in a dozen days
I lead but one! Ere breakfast was a nun;
Then play'd the housewife; after that, to horse;
Then, dinner o'er, a Naiad on the lake,
Floating to music! Evening changed the scene
Again; and night again,—which I did close
In my balcony, list'ning by the moon
The melting cadence of the serenade!
Now morning, evening, noon, and night are nought—
But morning, evening, noon and night. No change
Save in their times and names! What I get up
I last throughout the day, and so lie down,
The solitary lady of the duchess!
And how I bear it! Wonderfully! Past
Belief! I'll do't no longer! If I do,
Then never was I born in Mantua. [*Shouts.*]
What's that? the city all astir!—a crowd
Before the palace—I will ope the casement:—
I feel as I could leap into the street!

[*Opens Casement.*

Enter MARIANA.

Mari. What do you at the casement, Floribel?
Flo. Look from it, madam.
Mari. That I see. At what
Is it you look?
Flo. At happy people, madam,—
Some standing, others walking, others running;
All doing what they list—like merry birds
At liberty.

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Mari. Come from the casement—shut it.
Flo. Nay, rather you approach it, madam ! Do !
And look from't too—there's news, and from your lord !
Look—there's the courier !
Mari. [*Approaching the window.*] Where ?
Flo. That cavalier,
Who tries to pass along, but cannot, so
The throng do press upon him.

Enter FERRARDO *and* ANTONIO.

Fer. [*Aside to* ANTONIO.] At the casement !
Mari. Who is that cavalier ?
Flo. The courier, madam.
Mari. I know—but who is he ?
His family—his name ? I cannot take
My eyes from his face ! who is he ? Can't you tell ?
I have a strange desire to know his name !
Fer. [*Aside to* ANTONIO.] Father !
Flor. I'll fly and learn it.
Mari. Do, good girl !
And soon as you have learn'd, fly back again !
[FLORIBEL *goes out.*
Fer. [*Aside to* ANTONIO.] I pray you mark, but speak not—
[*Approaches the window on tiptoe, returns, and speaks to himself.*
It is St. Pierre !
Incredible ! [*To* ANTONIO.] It is the courier, father,
Of whom they were discoursing.
Mari. I have lost him !
He has entered the palace—I should like again
To see him—I should like to speak to him !
Fer. [*Aside to* ANTONIO.] My life on't she will hold a court to-day—
Accost her, father.
Ant. Benedicite,
Fair daughter.
Mari. Father !—What, his grace !—I think,
Or I mistake, there's news from my dear lord ?
Ant. Madam, there is, and happy news.—Your lord
Has won another victory !

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Fer. All Mantua
Would have a heart of overflowing joy,
Would but your highness notify your will
To let it speak its happiness, and pay
Congratulations to you.—May I hope
You do not pause from doubt? Your confessor
Approves your highness somewhat should relax
Your life of close seclusion.

Mari. [*after a pause.*] Be it so.

Fer. [*aside to* ANTONIO.] I told you, father—

[FLORIBEL *re-enters.*

Flo. Madam, he is call'd—

Fer. St. Pierre—you mean the courier
That brought these happy tidings?

Mari. Floribel,
I want your aid. My lord, and reverend father,
Soon as my toilet's made I shall descend.

[MARIANA *and* FLORIBEL *go out.*

Ant. What kind of man is this?

Fer. A kind of devil,
That grasps you with his eye, as fascinate
Serpents, 'tis said, their prey:—a tongue to match,
In glosing speech, the master-fiend himself!
I'm troubled, father. Was the dame you spoke of
Indeed a pattern, like my cousin's wife,
Of saintly self-denial?

Ant. Yes, my son.

Fer. I grieve we urged her highness with her presence
To grace the court to-day. I tremble for her.
Come! Shall I tell thee something—No, I will not!
When you can lead the sea, you'll sound the depth
Of woman's art.—Would you believe it—No—
While there's a doubt suspicion should be dumb.
Think'st thou I would have back'd her guardian's suit
But that I knew he had his reasons?—'Sdeath!
What am I doing?—Come, your reverence,
The man of proper charity condemns not,
Except upon enforcement. All is right!

[*They go out.*

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SCENE III.—*A Room in the Palace.*

Enter FLORIO *and* COSMO.

Florio. Where is the regent ?

Cos. With the confessor
In the chamber of the duchess. Nay, my lord,
He has quitted it, and is here.

Florio. You may withdraw.

[COSMO *goes out on one side. Enter* FER. *on the other.*

Fer. Well ? where's St. Pierre ?—I thought you were together !

Florio. We were, but parted for a moment. Fortune,
In the task you set me, kindly has forestalled me.
Halting to bait within some miles of this
He met a friend, whose hand he scarce had shaken
Ere the ready dice were out. In brief, your grace,
He has enter'd Mantua ducatless !—Of my own counsel
I broke to him your need of his assistance,
Touching your cousin's wife—and promised him
A pledge, I knew your highness will redeem,
Replenish'd coffers, would he undertake
To pleasure you.

Fer. Will he do it ?

Florio. Sullenly,
But fully he consented—he is here.

Fer. Retire a little. [Count *retires.*

Enter ST. PIERRE.

Welcome, St. Pierre !—welcome my friend !—I'm glad
To see you.

St. P. Would you take me for a knave ?

Fer. What mean you ?

St. P. Would you take me for a knave ?

Fer. No.

St. P. No ? Why then I'm fit to do your pleasure.
Come !—to my work—when am I to begin ?

Fer. The matter ?

St. P. I have lived an honest life
These six months—knavery is new to me !
I set about it feverishly.

Fer. What !

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Is't knavery to net a pretty woman?
They catch birds so.
St. P. Pshaw!—I am past the time.
Fer. Mind is the brightness of the body—lights it,
When years, its proper but less subtle fire
Begins to dim. Man, I could tell thee how
She conn'd thy visage from her casement; sent
Her confidante to learn thy name: seemed lost
At losing thee! Win thou discourse with her,
And hold it when thou winn'st it,—'twill content me
Thou make her but the object of remark.
Away! Go lean on yonder pedestal,
And watch thy opportunity to draw
Her notice towards thee—Thy obeisance does it;
Or anything most slight;—her lord's success
Is plea that you accost her; she is new
To the court,—a stranger to its law of distance,
Which 'tis expedient thou infringe.—Couldst master
Aught that's about her person—say a ring,
A brooch, a chain, in curiosity
Besought of her for near inspection, then
Mislaid or dropp'd—not to be found again,—
It were a thousand ducats in thy hand.
'Sdeath, man, hold up thy head, and look at fortune,
That smiles on thee, and asks thee to embrace her!
What dost thou gaze at?
St. P. Who is that?
Fer. The duchess.
St. P. Indeed, a lady of surpassing beauty!
Fer. An irksome task, methinks, I've set you—
Come!
About it! to thy post!
St. P. Surpassing fair! [*Goes out.*
Fer. [*looking after him.*] He has caught her eye already,—excellent!
He bows to her! Does she curtsey?—yes, i' faith!
And to the very ground! You're welcome, sir!
He speaks to her! How takes she his advances?
She entertains them! They pass on in converse!
Hold it but on, she's lost! [FLORIO *comes down.*
Do you see?

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Florio. So soon !
I wish him fortune ! As I loved her once,
I even loathe her now !
Fer. Could you believe it ?
He crosses her, and straight her eye is caught !
He speaks, and straight is master of her ear !
Solace for baffled hopes ! From infancy
I loathed my cousin for his elder right,
And leap'd into his seat with lighter spring,
Than he, I thought, had miss'd it ! He returns,
And I, with humbled brow, in sight of all
Descend, that he may mount ! I'll pay him shame
For shame ;—but he shall have't with interest !
Where is the confessor ? I must to him.
Mix with the company, and point to them
The eye of questioning remark : with looks
Speak sentences !—More surely does not raise
One wave another wave, than marvel grows
On marvel.—Interjections have a world
Of argument ! " Incredible !"—" Odd !"—" Strange !"
Will make a thousand hearers prick their ears,
And conjure wonders out of commonest things !
Then with commiseration you may do
A murder easily ! " Alack !" " Alas !"
Use daggers that seem tears.—Away ! Away !
For now or never is the golden hour ! [*They go out.*

SCENE IV.—*Another Room in the Palace.*

Enter MARIANA *and* ST. PIERRE.

Mari. I thank you for the story of your travels :
You make me wish to see the world, of which
Such wonders you relate. I think you said,
You were but newly come to Mantua ?
You must have been in Mantua before, then,
So many seem to know you ?
St. P. I have been
Before in Mantua.
Mari. 'Tis very strange,

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But when I saw thee first I felt as if
We were of old acquaintance! have we met
Before?
St. P. No, lady.
Mari. It is very strange,
You have never been in Switzerland?
St. P. Oh, yes,
It is my birth-place.
Mari. Ay! so is it mine.
'Tis a dear country! never met we there?
St. P. No.
Mari. No! 'tis odd! how many years is't since
You were in Switzerland?
St. P. 'Tis fifteen years.
Mari. So long! I was an infant then—no, no,
We have not met before—'Tis odd—at least
You are my countryman!
[*Holding out her hands to him.*
[*Visitors have been occasionally crossing the stage during this scene, observing* MARIANA *and* ST. PIERRE. *Enter in the back-ground,* ANTONIO *and* FERRARDO.
Fer. Had I been told it,
I would not have believed it.
Mari. Switzerland
Is a dear country! Switzerland!
St. P. It is
The land of beauty, and of grandeur, lady,
Where looks the cottage out on a domain
The palace cannot boast of. Seas of lakes,
And hills of forests! crystal waves that rise
'Midst mountains all of snow, and mock the sun,
Returning him his flaming beams more thick
And radiant than he sent them.—Torrents there
Are bounding floods! and there the tempest roams
At large, in all the terrors of its glory!
And then our valleys! ah, they are the homes
For hearts! our cottages, our vineyards, orchards,—
Our pastures studded with the herd and fold!
Our native strains that melt us as we sing them!
A free—a gentle—simple—honest people!

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Mari. I see them, signor,—I'm in Switzerland !
I do not stand in Mantua !—dear country !
Except in one thing, I'm not richer, signor,
Than when I was a child in Switzerland,
And mistress only of this little cross.
[*Pressing the cross to her breast.*
St. P. [*Anxiously.*] Your pardon, lady ! Pray you let me see
That cross again !
Mari. Right willingly.
Ant. [*Coming forward.*] Hence, signor !
Mari. Father !
Ant. I pray your grace retire—but first
Command that libertine from the apartment !
St. P. [*Sternly surveying alternately* ANTONIO *and* FERRARDO.] I go, your reverence, of mine own accord. [*Goes out, followed by* FERRARDO.
Mari. Father, what meant you by that word which turn'd
My very blood to ice ?
Ant. Behoves your highness
To keep your eye upon your husband's honour,
If not upon your own !
Mari. How !
Ant. Heaven alone
Can judge the heart ;—men must decide by actions,
And yours to-night to all have given offence.
Mari. Offence !
Ant. A woman hath in every state
Most need of circumspection ;—most of all
When she becomes a wife !—she is a spring
Must not be doubted ; if she is, no oath
That earth can utter will so purge the stream
That men will think it pure.
Mari. Is this to me ?
Ant. Women who play the wanton—
Mari. Father !
Ant. Daughter !
That look and tone of high command become
Thy state indeed.
Mari. No, father, not my state—

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They become me!—state greater—higher far,
One who deserved that name I blush'd to hear—
And thou, a reverend man, shouldst blush to use—
Might fill! but though it were an empress's,
I would defy her in her breast to seat
The heart that's throned in mine! If 'tis a crime
To boast—heaven pardon you—you have made me sin!

Ant. Behoves us heed appearances?

Mari. No, father,
Behoves us heed desires and thoughts! and let
Appearances be what they may be—you
Shall never shape them so, that evil men
Will not their own construction put upon them.
Father, it was the precept of my father.

Ant. He little knew the world.

Mari. He knew what's better,
Heaven, and the smile of his own conscience!
What have I done?

Ant. Given cause of scandal, daughter.

Mari. How?

Ant. By a preference so mark'd, it drew
The eyes of all upon you.

Mari. Evil eyes—
Which see defect in frank and open deeds!
The gentleman appear'd mine old acquaintance—
That drew me towards him:—I discover'd now
He was my countryman—that makes allies
Of even foes that meet in foreign lands,
Then well may couple strangers:—he discoursed
Of my dear native country, till its peaks
Began, methought, to cleave the sky, as there
They stood before me!—I was happy—pleased
With him that made me so—Out of a straw
To raise a conflagration!

Ant. You forget
You are not now the commissary's ward,
But consort to the Duke of Mantua.—
You're a changed woman.

Mari. No, i' faith, the same!
My skin is not of other texture—This,

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My hand, is just the hand I knew before!
If my glass tells the truth, the face and form
I have to-day, I had to-day last year!
My mind is not an inch the taller grown
Than mellowing time hath made it in his course!
And, for my heart—it beats not in my breast,
If in the ducal chair of Mantua,
'Tis not the same I had, when I did sit
On some wild turret of my native hills,
And burn with love and gratitude to heaven
That made a land so fair, and me its daughter!

Ant. Hear me! you have wrong'd your lord.

Mari. I have wrong'd my lord!
How have I wrong'd my lord?

Ant. By entertaining
With mark'd and special preference, a man
Until to-day a perfect stranger to thee.

Mari. Go on!

Ant. He is a libertine.

Mari. Go on!

Ant. A woman who has such a friend has nought
To do with honest men.

Mari. Go on!

Ant. A wife
Has done with friends!—her heart, had it the room
Of twenty hearts, her husband ought to fill,—
A friend that leaves not space for other friends,
Save such as nature's earliest warrant have
To house there.

Mari. You are right in that! Go on.

Ant. A court's a place where men have need to watch
Their acts and words not only, but their looks;
For prying eyes beset them round about,
That wait on aught but thoughts of charity.
What were thy words I know not, but thy acts
Have been the comment of the Court to-day.
Of eyes that gaped with marvel—groups that stood
Gazing upon thee—leaning ears to lips,
Whose whispers, were their import known to thee,
Had stunn'd thee worse than thunder!

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Mari. So! Go on.
Ant. What if they reach thy consort?
Mari. What!
Ant. Ay, what!
Mari. He'll spurn them as he ought; as I do spurn them.
For shame! for shame! Me thou shouldst not arraign,
But rather those who basely question me!
Father, the heart of innocence is bold!
Tell me, how comes your Court to harbour one
Whom I should blush to speak to? If its pride
Be not the bearing that looks down on vice,
What right has it to hold its head so high?
Endure at Court what from our cottage door
My father would have spurn'd!—If that's your Court,
I'll be nor slave nor mistress of your Court!
Father, no more! E'en from thy reverend lips
I will not hear what I've no right to list to.
What!—taint my lord with question of my truth!
Could he who proved my love on grounds so broad
As I have given my lord, on grounds so mean
Descend to harbour question of my love—
Though broke my heart in the disseverment,
He were no longer lord or aught of mine!
Father, no more! I will not hear thee! Frown—
Heaven does not frown!—to heaven I turn from thee.
[*Goes out.*
Ant. This confidence offends me.—Swerving virtue
Endureth not rebuke—while that, that's steadfast,
With smiling patience suns the doubt away,
Wherewith mistrust would cloud it! 'Tis not right—
An eye so firm-resentful—speech so lofty—

MARIANA *enters unperceived, and kneels to him.*

An air of such defiance—
Mari. Father!
Ant. Daughter!
Mari. I am thy daughter! O my father, bless me!
Were I the best, I were not 'bove thy charity,
Were I the worst, I should not be beneath it!
Ant. Thou hast my blessing.

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Mari. Ere I break my fast
To-morrow, father, I'll confess to thee,
And thou shalt know how little or how much
I merit what thou givest me! so, good night!

Ant. Good night, fair daughter. Benedicite!

[*They go out severally.*

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Street.*

Enter BARTOLO, BERNARDO, CARLO, *and others.*

Bar. Hush, Signors! speak softly! 'Tis treason, and we may be hanged for it.—So the matter stands! The young Duchess, I fear me, is an old sinner—and what a saint she looked! Let no man marry a wife who looks like a saint. Please Providence, mine shall be as ill-favoured as Satan!

Ber. 'Tis a way to make sure of a wife.

Bar. It is, signor. Such is the value of beauty. Let any man take his own case. Now myself, for instance—how many a scrape should I have avoided had I been born as ill-favoured as some people! He is the happiest man, be assured, whom no one has reason to envy.—Now, thou art a happy man, Bernardo.

Ber. I thank you, Signor Bartolo.

Car. But when happened this?

Bar. I told you it happened about half-an-hour ago.

Ber. Prithee, signor, tell it us again?

Bar. Well then, draw near, and remember you are sworn to secrecy.

All. We are, we are!

Bar. You know I am fond of the news—though I have as little curiosity as any man. Well, where can one get news if not at the palace? So, to the palace I went this morning, as I do every morning.—Few per-

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sons have admittance at the palace as I have, for they are people of discretion at the palace, and suffer not rogues that come peeping and prying—spies and blabbers—scoundrels of no trust or honesty—but I have admittance to the palace, for they know me.—

Ber. Well!

Bar. When I entered it all was confusion! One running this way, another that way. One whispering this person, and every one with wonder in his looks! I warrant you I did not look the figure of wonder too.

Car. Go on, good Bartolo.

Bar. Well: I happen to have a friend or two at the palace—Lucky for me that I have so—there is no doing anything there without a friend.—"Would that such a one was here," said I to myself; and scarce had I said it, when in runs the very man I was thinking of.

Ber. Excellent!

Bar. Just in the nick of time, or I verily believe I should have died of wonder;—at the same time, every one knows I am the least curious man in all Mantua. Well, in runs my friend, just in the nick of time.—"The matter?" cried I. "Treason," whispered he, "but I dare not breathe it for my life."—"What is it?" said I; "I'll be as mute as the marble under my feet."—"You shall hear it," cried he, "for you are a lad of discretion, and have a guard upon your tongue." You see, signors, that I have a character at the palace.

Ber. Go on, Bartolo.

Bar. Well; as I told you before, the substance was this—and nothing more nor less:—Julian St. Pierre, who has lately returned to the Court, and for his wild practices would have been dismissed from it many a year ago, but for the favour of the Duke Ferrardo,—this Julian St. Pierre, I say, was half an hour ago discovered stealing from the ante-room that leads to the duchess's chamber, and secured upon the spot.

Ber. and Carlo. Go on!

Bar. I have no more to tell you—you know as much as I do.—But be discreet! a silent tongue betokens a wise head! I cannot stay with you longer. I have some friends in the next street to see: others in the

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street beyond! more again, in the street beyond that! I know not how many I have to see! I have the whole city to see. Now be discreet!—remember I got it as I give it, on promise of secrecy—be discreet!—discovered half an hour ago, stealing from the ante-room that leads to the duchess's chamber!—be discreet, I say—a silent tongue, a wise head!—Be discreet—be discreet! [*They go out severally.*

SCENE II.—*Ante-Room, leading to the Duchess's Apartment.*

Enter MARIANA.

Mari. Or I have had sweet dreams, whose fleeting forms
Have but the charm of their fair presence left;
Or by my couch hath some good angel watch'd,
And on my lapsed unconscious spirit breathed
The balmy fragrance of his heavenly visit;
So light my heart as it were clad with wings
And floated in the sun! My lord—my lord!
How is this? 'tis strange! at thought of my dear lord
My soaring heart hath dropp'd at once to earth.
It is the incidents of yesternight
The thought of him recals!—I feel as though
I fear'd my lord! or is't the world I fear?
The world which yesternight I did defy,
But now begin to think upon its snares,
And feel, as they beset me round so thick,
I cannot step but I do tread upon
The precincts of perdition! Blessed mother!
My heart is heavy as just now 'twas light.

Enter ANTONIO.

My confessor! here's comfort! welcome, father.—
For mercy's sake what's this? I welcome thee,
And thou to me givest aught, but an all hail!
Why what's the matter? can I be awake?
Father, I need kind looks and words to-day,—
My heart is sick, oh earth, how sick! I look'd

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For thee to bring me peace—alack ! alack !
Why do your eyes of mercy turn to swords ?
Only they pierce where feeling is more quick !
Father, be pitiful : 'tis not the proud
And forward woman braved thee yesternight,
But thy repentant daughter kneels to thee !
Ant. Repentance is a grace—but it is one
That grows upon deformity—fair child
To an unsightly mother !—Nor, indeed,
Always a grace !—'tis oftentimes—too oft,
The bootless terror of the stranded soul,
When ebbing passion leaves it all alone,
Upon the bleak and dreary shoals of sin !—
So is't of different kinds—which kind is thine ?
Mari. Father !
Ant. Thy lord ! thy lord !
Mari. What of my lord ?
Ant. Nay, rather answer thou, what of thy lord ?
I know that he is Duke of Mantua,
Noble, and fair, and good ! Hath high allies,
Heads the proud war in wisdom as in arms,
The foremost plume of the van ! and, crown of all,
I know he thinks himself, of every wish
Which heaves that breast of thine, the paramount
The happy lord !
Mari. He thinks himself—
Ant. And presses
The 'larum-curtain'd couch of restless war,
In hopes to change it for that downy one
Where he did leave, as he imagined safe,
His dearest honour by thy side reposing,—
And little dreams that stain has reach'd it there !
Mari. That stain has reach'd it there !
Ant. You slept alone
Last night ?
Mari. I slept alone ?—yes—I did sleep alone !
What idle words are these ?—I slept alone ?
I know I slept alone last night !—the night
Before—the night preceding that !—alone ?
How could I otherwise than sleep alone,
When my dear lord's away ?

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Ant. Thou lookest—
Mari. How?
Ant. And speak'st—
Mari. How—how do I look and speak?
Ant. Like innocence.
Mari. Dost doubt my innocence?
Ant. They say,
Thou didst not sleep alone!
Mari. Who say so?
Ant. All
The palace.
Mari. They!——I cannot speak the word,
Which doth imply the acting of a part
Unparalleled in shame!
Ant. Another part,
Which doth involve a tenfold deeper shame,
They do refer the acting of to thee!
Mari. Art thou my friend?
Ant. Hast thou not proved me so?
Mari. I have. Forgive me that I question'd thee;
But when I know my heart's supreme content
In its own clearness—not in act alone,
But wish; nor wish alone, but thought of sin;
When I know this, and think of yesternight,
And worse than yesternight do find to-day,
I 'gin to think the world is made of hate,
And doubt if thou—e'en thou—art not my foe!
Oh, do not be my foe! indeed—indeed
The helpless maid that hung upon thy robe
To beg protection, and received it there,
Unchanged in all—save that she is a wife,
And as a wife more bound than e'er to Heaven—
In strait more piteous than she knelt in then,
Clings, kneeling, to it now! What's said of me?
And on what ground?—for not the robe I hold
Less conscious is of ground of foul report
Than I am!
Ant. Left thy chamber any one
This morning, whom thy honour should forbid
To cross its threshold?
Mari. No!

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Ant. Art sure? 'tis said
There did—The man was seen!
Mari. The man!
Ant. The man
Departing from this ante-chamber!—this,
Which none except thy lord, myself, and those
Who wait upon thy person, do frequent.
Mari. Who was the man?
Ant. Seen in the very act
Of slinking from your door!
Mari. Who was the man?
Ant. The same that last night held thee in discourse.
Mari. I'm lost!

Enter FERRARDO, LORENZO, COSMO, *and others.*

Fer. Lady, by your leave, we wish
To pass into your chamber.
[FERRARDO *and* LORENZO *pass in, the others remain.*
Ant. You are lost!
Mari. I'm lost—but I am innocent!
Fer. [*Returning with* LORENZO.] My lords,
You know who owns this scarf?
Cos. It is St. Pierre's!
Fer. 'Twas found beneath the couch—our advocate
Of state it was that saw it there:—are ye satisfied?
Cos. We are, your grace.
Ant. Find earth where grows no weed, and you may find
A heart wherein no error grows. I thought
Thy heart without one—thought it was a garden
So thickly set with flowers, no weed had room
To shoot there! Who would sin, who knew how shame
Confounds the trespasser! I cannot stay,—
My tears be vouchers for me that I loved her,
And fain would doubt the lapse I must allow.
[*Goes out.*
Fer. My worthy friends, follow the confessor,
I wish to speak in private with her highness.
[LORENZO, COSMO, *and* LORDS, *go out.*
I am your friend! you are accused of treason,—
The grounds against you are conclusive ones;

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You judges will be those who will not spare!
And soon and summary will be your trial;
The penalty of your offence is death!
You are now a prisoner—I pity you,
Would save you!—Will! As soon as dusk sets in
In a convenient spot without the town,
To which in secret you shall be convey'd,
I shall have horses waiting—

[MARIANA *shrieks and starts up from her knee, on which she had remained in a state of mental stupefaction.*

Hush!

Mari. For flight!

Fer. For flight!—by dawn you shall be far away
From Mantua.

Mari. At dusk?

Fer. At dusk;—as soon
As dusk begins to fall expect me here,
And thou shalt have supply of gold enough
To pay the charges of thy journey—yea,
Maintain thee in abundance where thou wilt.

Mari. I may depend upon thee?

Fer. Fear me not.
Remember now—at dusk.

Mari. I will! at dusk. [*They go out severally.*

SCENE III.—*Another Chamber in the Palace.*

Enter FERRARDO.

Fer. His heart is in my power as 'twere a thing,
Which in my hand I held and I could crush
With a grasp! Nor can it 'scape my power! her name—
That flower of woman's pride, which ta'en away,
From a bright paragon she turns a thing
For basest eyes to look askant upon—
Is blasted past the power of rain and sun
To bring it to its pristine hue again.
Now for St. Pierre—he also must to-night
Take leave of Mantua. [*Unlocks door.*] Come forth,
my friend!

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Enter St. Pierre.

Dost thou not know me? What an air is this?
A king could not a loftier assume
At high offence! 'Twas thus with thee last night,
Nothing but moody looks,—until the count
With much persuasion woo'd you to our feast:
I wonder'd at thee!

St. P. Are we alone?

Fer. What's this?

St. P. Are we alone? where are the craven minions
That overpower'd me in the corridor,
And at thy bidding dragg'd me hither?

Fer. Pshaw!
Art thou no wiser than to heed them? know'st not
'Twas done on my instruction—mine—thy friend's?

St. P. Are we alone?

Fer. We are alone.

St. P. Art sure
That door is unattended? that no minions
Watch it without?

Fer. I am.

St. P. Wilt lock it?

Fer. [*Locking it and returning.*] There!

St. P. [*Springing upon him.*] Villain!

Fer. What means this violence?

St. P. You struck me
When I contended with the recreants,
That smite this moment what the one before
They fawn'd upon!—Across their arms you struck,
And fell'd me with the blow!—now take it back!

Fer. Stop! you'll repent it if you strike!

St. P. I tell thee,
I ne'er received a blow from mortal man
But I did pay it back with interest!—One by one
I have parted with those virtues of a man
Which precept doth inculcate! but one grace
Remains—the growth of nature—the true shoot
Abuse could not eradicate, and leave
The trunk and root alive,—one virtue—manhood!
The brow whereon doth sit disdain of threat,
Defiance of aggression, and revenge

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For contumely. You did strike me! Come!
I must have blow for blow!
Fer. [*Drawing his dagger.*] Let fall thy hand
Upon my person—lo, my dagger's free,
And I will sheathe it in thy heart!
St. P. I care not,
So I die quits with thee!
Fer. I would not kill thee,
So don't advance thy hand! Nay, listen first,
And then, if thou wilt, strike me!—Strike!—abuse
Thy friend, who, when he struck thee, was thy friend
As much as he is now, or ever was;
Who struck thee but that he should seem thy foe,
To hide how much indeed he was thy friend;
Nay, if the lack of quittance for a blow
Which but in show was one, for 'tis the thought
That makes the act—must constitute us foes,
My dagger's up! now give a blow indeed,
For one that seem'd but one.
St. P. I take't in thought,
And let thy person unprofaned go.
Fer. No animal so wild it will not tame,
Save man! Come, calm thyself, sit down—as yet
Thou know'st not whether to caress thy friend
Or tear him! Should'st thou tear him? Come, sit down.
There's not a man in Italy save thee
Would fret—and he the master all at once
Of good ten thousand ducats! Still a brow!
Odd's man, be merry! rub thy hands and laugh.
Thou art rich—look here. [*Showing a casket.*
St. P. How came I yesternight
To sleep in the chamber of the duke? And why
This morning when I left the ante-room
Was I assaulted by thy minions?
Fer. Pshaw!
Enough, thou slepst where thou didst sleep, next chamber
To the duke's wife, and thereby madest thy fortune.
For every ducat of the sum I named
Is thine—but render me one service more.

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St. P. Name it.
Fer. Just write for me in boasting vein,
Confession thou didst pillow yesternight
There, where the honour of the duke forbids
That head save his should lie.
Why do you gaze? 'Tis easily done.
St. P. It is.
Fer. It takes but pen and ink, and here they are;
Make use of time! the hour that is not used
Is lost, and might have been the luckiest,
Converted to account: what ponder'st thou?
St. P. The manner best to execute thy wish:
I'm hardly in the vein—'twould put me into't
Would'st thou relate the means whereby I came
To lie in the duke's chamber.
Fer. 'Twould retard thee!
St. P. No, it will rather help me. When I write
Ofttimes I miss the thought, too much intent
On finding it,—looking at something else,
Lo, there it stands before me of itself!
How came I in the chamber of the duke?
Fer. You supp'd, you may remember, with the count
And me?
St. P. I do.
Fer. 'Twas plann'd between us.
St. P. Well?
Fer. And for our end we kept the revel up—
I mean the count and I—for, as I said
Before, thou wast not in the joyous vein,—
Till all the palace had retired to rest.
St. P. My lord, may't please you stop—my thought has come.
A fair commencement! excellent! most fair!
You see how much you help me! there—go on:
You revell'd till the palace was at rest—
What then?
Fer. Why, then finding thee jealous still
Of the kindly grape, we drugg'd your cup, and when
The potion work'd, convey'd you in your sleep,—
To sound or stir profound as that of death,—
Into the chamber of the duke—of the key

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Of which I keep a duplicate—and there
We laid you in his bed.
St. P. Break off again
While I go on!—You see, my lord, how great
A help you are to me! It comes as fast
As though I were inditing what you spoke—
Your grace rehearsed to me. Most excellent!
And now proceed again!
Fer. Where left I off?
St. P. Where you had laid me in his highness' bed.
Fer. You're right. There left we thee to sleep that night,
With a partition only 'twixt his wife
And thee,—and that made frailer by a door,—
The lock of which I from its use absolved,
And casting 'neath her highness' couch thy scarf,
As proof of closer neighbourhood to her,
Withdrew to feast on foretaste of revenge.
St. P. Enough!
Fer. Enough?
St. P. Tut, tut! I only meant
Your highness to break off, while I resume.
My thoughts do flow again—better and better!
Your grace,—a hundred ducats, I have done
Almost as soon as you—go on—what end
Proposed your highness to yourself by this?
Fer. To blast her name, and in the death of that
Involve my cousin's life! accordingly
By my direction wert thou watch'd and seized,
And hither brought as partner in a crime,
Whose penalty is death!—which thou shalt 'scape—
'Scape with enriched life—so ne'er again
Thou show'st thy face in Mantua, and keep'st
Thy counsel.
St. P. [*Writing.*] Have you done?
Fer. I have.
St. P. And so
Have I—a fair commencement! better far
Continuation! and the winding up
The fairest of the whole! howe'er, of that
Your highness shall be judge:—'sdeath here's a word

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I did not mean to write, for one I wanted!
I needs must take it out,—I pray your highness
Lend me a knife.
Fer. I have not one.
St. P. Well then
Your dagger—if the edge of it is sharp.
Fer. There 'tis.
St. P. And there is the confession, duke;
Sign it.
Fer. Why this is my confession!
St. P. Ay,
Indeed, your highness.
Fer. Word for word.
St. P. You'll own
I'm something of a clerk—I hardly hoped
It would have pleased your highness! My lord duke,
Sign the confession.
Fer. Why?
St. P. It pleases me.
If that contents thee not, I'm in thy power,
And I'd have thee in mine! Your highness sees
I'm frank with you.
Fer. Can it be you, St. Pierre?
St. P. No—it is you!—and not the peasant lad
Whom fifteen years ago in evil hour
You chanced to cross upon his native hills,—
In whose quick eye you saw the subtle spirit
Which suited you, and tempted it; who took
Your hint, and follow'd you to Mantua
Without his father's knowledge—his old father;
Who thinking that he had a prop in him
Man could not rob him of, and Heaven would spare,
Bless'd him one night, ere he laid down to sleep,
And waking in the morning found him gone!
[FERRARDO *attempts to rise.*
Move not, or I shall move—you know me!
Fer. Nay,
I'll keep my seat. St. Pierre, I train'd thee like
A cavalier!
St. P. You did—you gave me masters,
And their instructions quickly I took up

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As they did lay them down! I got the start
Of my contemporaries!—not a youth
Of whom could read, write, speak, command a weapon,
Or rule a horse, with me! you gave me all—
All the equipments of a man of honour,—
But you did find a use for me, and made
A slave, a profligate, and pander of me.
[FERRARDO *about to rise.*
I charge you keep your seat!
Fer. You see I do!
St. Pierre, be reasonable!—you forget.
There are ten thousand ducats.
St. P. Give me, duke,
The eyes that look'd upon my father's face!
The hands that help'd my father to his wish!
The feet that flew to do my father's will!
The heart that bounded at my father's voice!
And say that Mantua were built of ducats,
And I could be its duke at cost of these.
I would not give them for it! Mark me, duke!
I saw a new-made grave in Mantua,
And on the head-stone read my father's name;—
To seek me, doubtless, hither he had come—
To seek the child that had deserted him—
And died here,—ere he found me.
Heaven can tell how far he wander'd else!
Upon that grave I knelt an alter'd man,
And rising thence, I fled from Mantua. Nor had
But tyrant hunger drove me back again [return'd
To thee—to thee!—My body to relieve
At cost of my dear soul! I have done thy work,
Do mine! and sign me that confession straight.
I'm in thy power, and I'll have thee in mine!
Fer. Art thou indeed in earnest?
St. P. Look in my eyes.
Fer. St. Pierre, perhaps I have underpaid thee?
St. P. Sign!
Fer. I'll double the amount!
St. P. Come, sign!
Fer. St. Pierre,
Will forty thousand ducats please thee?

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St. P. There's
The dial, and the sun is shining on it—
The shadow on the very point of twelve—
My case is desperate! Your signature
Of vital moment is unto my peace!
My eye is on the dial! Pass the shadow
The point of noon, the breadth of but a hair
As can my eye discern—and, that unsign'd,
The steel is in thy heart—I speak no more!

Fer. Saint Pierre!—Not speak—Saint Pierre!

St. P. Is it signed?

Fer. [*Writing hurriedly.*] It is.

St. P. Your signet, as a proof I am at large.
Now take my station in that closet—No
Attempt at an alarm—In, in, I say!
Hold wind we'll make the port.—I thank your highness! [*Opens doors, speaks aloud, and goes out.*

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Mantua.*

Enter BARTOLO *and* BERNARDO, *meeting.*

Ber. Whither so fast, Bartolo?

Bar. I know not! Anywhere—everywhere. I would I were as many men as there are streets in Mantua, that I might be in every part of the city at the same time. Have you any news?

Ber. No.

Bar. Nothing of St. Pierre?

Ber. No.

Bar. Nothing of the duchess?

Ber. No.

Bar. I have fasted twelve hours together and upwards, and never hungered for a meal—as I hunger

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for news. Is not that Carlo? Signor Carlo! Hoa! hilloa! — here — Signor Carlo! — make haste — make haste!

Enter CARLO, *running.*

Carlo. Well, Signor Bartolo! — what's the matter?

Bar. Can you tell me any news?

Carlo. No, signor.

Bar. Nothing of the duchess?

Carlo. No.

Bar. Nothing of St. Pierre?

Carlo. No.

Bar. Can I meet with no one who will tell me any news?

Carlo. By-the-bye, a horseman just now alighted near the palace.

Bar. [*Going to run off.*] Indeed!

Carlo. Stop! you won't find him now.

Bar. Well?

Carlo. He had ridden at full speed.

Bar. He had? Go on, Signor Carlo.

Carlo. In less than a minute a crowd gathered round him—men, women, and children—asking all at once for the news.

Bar. Go on, dear Signor Carlo!

Carlo. You never heard such a clatter—"Have they found the duchess?"—"Have they caught St. Pierre?" "The news!"—"The news!" and not a soul would hold his tongue to listen to the news; and what do you think it was?

Bar. I'm dying to know!

Carlo. Why his wife had got scalded and he had come to town for a leech.

Ber. There's news for you at last, Signor Bartolo! But whither were you running?

Carlo. To my breakfast—I have been up since four—have you breakfasted yet?

Ber. No.

Carlo. Wilt go home with me?

Ber. I care not if I do! But look at Signor Bartolo—what's the matter, signor?

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Bar. I wonder if they will be overtaken—The poor duchess!

Ber. Mark if he is not weeeping—what a tender-hearted lad it is!

Bar. I am a tender-hearted lad, Signor Bernardo—I can cry by the hour! Tell me a doleful tale, and see if my handkerchief is not out.

Ber. And what are you weeping for now?

Bar. To think of the duchess—if she should be caught. The poor duchess—the fair duchess! what a sight it would be! Though I had to walk a hundred miles, I'd come to see it.

Ber. What would you come to see?

Bar. [*crying.*] Her execution, Signor Bernardo. How I would hold my breath! How my heart would beat! How I would weep for the poor dear duchess!

Enter MARCO, *hastily.*

Marco. They are caught! they are caught!

Bar. Are they, dear Signor Marco? kind Signor Marco—when, where, and how?

Marco. On the other side of the lake—ten minutes ago; and by half-a-dozen burghers that luckily fell in with them.

Bar. Oh dear! put your hand to my heart, Signor Carlo. Feel how it beats! Kind Signor Marco, go on! 'Tis all over with them!

Marco. And so it ought to be—two arrant thieves!

Bar. Thieves! Signor Marco! thieves!

Marco. Ay, thieves! what else would you call them? They found upon them a salver of gold, and two massy cups of the same metal, all marked with the duke's arms. If that is not thievery, I know not what is.

Bar. Signor Carlo—Signor Bernardo! Heard you ever the like? To carry off the duke's plate! Go on, dear Signor Marco,—how lucky I had not gone before you came—go on—do, prithee! I suppose they will wait for the duke before anything is done?

Marco. Not they! what need to wait for the duke—summary justice will be done upon them.

Bar. Summary justice! think of that! O dear,

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Signor Bernardo! Signor Carlo, O dear, I shall never be able to stand it.

Marco. Stand what?

Bar. The sight—good, kind, dear Signor Marco, doesn't your heart bleed for them?

Marco. Does yours, Signor Bartolo?

Bar. It does; look at my eyes. If you never saw rain from a pair of eyes before, there 'tis for you. Rain pelting—Signor Marco, pelting rain. Summary justice, say you?

Marco. Yes, they are to be whipp'd at noon.

Bar. Whipp'd! Bernardo!—Carlo! Whipp'd!—You do not say whipp'd?

Marco. But I do!

Bar. Who are to be whipp'd?

Marco. Why, the two rascals who broke into the duke's jeweller's last night.

Bar. What a fool you are, Signor Marco! I thought it was St. Pierre and the duchess that had been taken. And we shall have no execution after all! See, signors, see! A horseman at full speed has just passed the end of the street, in the direction of the palace. News—Signors, news! Who makes the best use of his legs shall have the first on't.

[*Runs out—the rest following.*

SCENE II.—*A Tent.*

LEONARDO *and Soldiers discovered.*

Leon. I'faith, a glorious close! our brief campaign
Hath pass'd like sport upon a summer's day,
Without a cloud:—a game, where fortune lay
All on one lucky side—and that was ours!
Give order for the striking of our tents
At earliest dawn—I'll but salute the sun,
And straight for Mantua. [*Soldiers go out.*
O sweet the sight
Of his dear native land to him who brings
A brow, with honours laden, back to it!

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Dear Mantua, that twice has given me life,
Once in the breath which first I drew in it,
Now in the gift, without the having which
That breath were given in vain! How does my wife,
Bright crown of my bright fortunes? O, my heart—
How does my love?—the plume of victory
I've won, but wear not till I see it nod
In the bright mirror of her glistening eye.
When shall that be?—to-morrow?—blest to-morrow!
Would—would thou wast to-day!

Enter Second Officer.

Officer. Your cousin, and the nobles who compose
Your highness' council, with your confessor,
And advocate of state, attend without—in haste, and
From Mantua. [new

Leon. The tidings of our truce
Can scarce have reach'd them yet? Bad news flies
quick,
I deem'd not good was of so swift a wing.
Admit them.

Enter FERRARDO, FLORIO, ANTONIO, LORENZO, *and Nobles.*

Welcome, cousin—welcome, all!
Note of our victory I see has reach'd you,
And ye are come to give me greeting, which
I gladly should have journey'd to receive:
But where's my duchess? She had been, methinks,
A fair addition to your cavalcade—
You might have brought her with you.
[*To* FERRARDO, *who drops his eyes.*
Strangers yet—
Nay, then, the fault, I'm positive, is yours.
Had but you dropp'd a hint of your intent,
And given a glance of invitation to her,
She would have ta'en it as a ready friend,
Given you her hand, and thank'd you for the leave
To bear you company.

Fer. Your highness' pardon;
A man can't help his doubts, e'en if he would,
And I have grounds, and solid ones, for mine.

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Leon. Fie, fie, offend in any other thing,
And ere you ask you're pardon'd! Here are friends—
Friends of my love's and mine—tried friends, and yet
Not friends in this—to leave my wife behind,
Who loves me best,—when they in zeal of love
Are here to give me joy of my high fortune.
How does my lady, friend? How does she, father?
Why comes she not to greet me? You should be
Her harbingers—a step or two before?
Or bring ye charge from her to expedite
My long'd return to Mantua, as if
My heart were not remembrancer enough?
For never speed me, Heaven, if life is life—
If I do feel I live beneath the sun,—
Am what I am, the very fool of fortune,—
Until I stand in her sweet sight again.
[FERRARDO *and* FLORIO *whisper*.
Why whisper ye? [ANTONIO *and* LORENZO *whisper*.
And ye do whisper, too—
Hah! By your looks, I noted not before,
Ye come to tell me of disaster! speak!
The sum on't? 'Tis heavy—what is it?
Come, name me the amount! Is it my dukedom?
Or what?—'tis nothing of my wife—say that—
And say aught else which stern misfortune prompts!
Blow wind, mount wave,—no rock to shut me thence.
I see the strand to run my bark ashore,
And smile upon my shipwreck.
Fer. 'Tis of her
We come to speak.
Leon. 'Tis no mishap to her—
For you do speak in anger not in grief.
If what you come to say affects reproach—
Reproach of her! speak out—speak ye the truth,
Ye cannot speak in anger!
Fer. That our duty
Permitted us to leave you in that mind!
Leon. Pshaw! do thy duty—be it duty—'tis
Beyond its power of other mind to make me.
Fer. Thy lady is false to thee.
Leon. [*drawing.*] Thy tongue is false

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To thee!—It puts thy life in jeopardy;
Recal thy words or die!
Florio. My gracious liege,
He speaks the truth!
Leon. Thou too!
Lor. Your highness' patience.
What speaks your cousin, fain would I deny,
But cannot.
Leon. I do only doubt which way
To point my sword!
Ant. Your highness—
Leon. What say you?
Speak out, thou reverend man!—there only wants
Thy tongue to prove how little heavenward do
The thoughts of men incline, when her—heaven's work—
That bears, as never did a thing of earth,
The glorious impress of its shining hand—
These men would filch from heaven. Come, side with them,
And say my wife is false!
Ant. My gracious liege,
Restrain your ire at what you would not hear,
And audience give to what you ought to hear.
If facts, avouch'd by eyes, may be believed,
I say, that would not say it—thou art wrong'd!
Peruse that paper—there you have our grounds
For saying what we say.
Lor. O read, my liege!
Think 'tis our duty speaks, and what it says
Says at the cost of our unfeigned love,—
Which, sooner than mischance should undermine
Thy towering happiness, would be itself
The seaward mole, to meet the rushing wave
And break its fury ere it bursts on thee!
But wind and tide together setting in
Will sometimes overwhelm all obstacles—
So needs must fall this heavy surge on thee
Which we let o'er in drowning.
Leon. I read it—not
That I do fear it—or give credence to it.

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Fer. Your highness sees how fact doth hinge on fact.
Leon. No!—I see nothing!
Fer. Nothing!
Leon. Not a jot
That might not be contrived, and against which
Improbability doth not set its face.
My lord—my lord—you love me not—nor you—
Nor you.—I doubt if any loves me here:
I doubt all things but that my wife is true.
I will to Mantua, this very hour,
To crave her pardon that I listen'd to you.
Fer. My lord, she's fled from Mantua.
Leon. She is what?
Fer. She's fled from Mantua, as also is
Her paramour.
Leon. Recal that word, or else
Thou makest me do a murder! Is she fled?
Cousin, thou murder'st me! Speaks he the truth?
Gainsay him, and I heed not what ye say!
Cousin, thou didst but hear that she was fled,
Thou dost not speak from thine own knowledge?
Fer. Else
I had not spoken.
Leon. Fled—in company—
Fer. What else could I infer?
Leon. Thou but infer'st it,
Come then, all's well!—Let her be fled or not,
She has fled perhaps to friends, perhaps to me!

Enter Second Officer, *with* MARIANA.

Second Officer. My liege, the duchess.
Leon. Ha! I told you so!
Welcome, my loved—my wrong'd—my innocent—
Welcome, my loyal wife!
Mari. My liege, stand off!
Embrace me at the peril of your honour!
Your cousin here! the count! your confessor!
And he!—and these the members of your council!
My tongue may save its labour then. Yet whose
So fit to tell my husband, he's the lord
Of a dishonour'd bed,—as hers, whose heart,—

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That ne'er admitted thought of man save him,
Knew not its part that was not given to him,
Before itself as dearer heart set him,
Sun, earth, life, health, desire, knew nought but him,—
Yet could not guard the jewel paramount
Of what it loved so well, but by an act
Without a motive—monstrous to belief—
Which reason unto madness would refer—
Nay doubt that even madness' self could do!
What it so loved, did spoil, and bring at once
From proudest wealth to basest penury.

Leon. No—thou didst never swerve.—Truth dwells in thee!
Thou art all radiant with it!

Mari. Not a doubt!
My trusting lord! my dear and honour'd lord!
[*Throws herself at his feet.*

Leon. [*Endeavouring to raise her.*] Up to my heart!

Mari. No—by thy love!

Leon. I say
I'll have thee up—thy place is here!

Mari. [*Preventing him.*] My lord!
What holds that paper? tell me, is it not
My accusation? Let me see it—True
From first to last.—The facts not otherwise
Than here set down. Wouldst take me to thy heart,
And this against me?

Leon. Yes.

Mari. Nay, speak again,
And think before you speak. Say that the duke,
Your cousin, loves you not! say that the count
Doth owe you grudge!—say these, the members of
Your highness' council, are suborn'd by them—
Here stand two honest men who take their side!
Wouldst take me to thy heart, and this against me?

Leon. I would.

Mari. And if you would, you should not do it!

Leon. It is a plot.

Mari. It is—
But thou, my lord, must prove it to be one!
Else it hath oped a chasm 'twixt thee and me,

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Which, till thou close it up, or bridge it o'er
With stable-footed truth, that all may trust,
May not be cross'd.—Leap it—and all is lost!
Leon. Canst give me clue to find it out?
Mari. Methinks
I can. Thy cousin counsell'd me to fly,
To 'scape, as he did say, the penalty
Of my imputed crime,—but, as I thought,
To furnish of that crime conclusive proof:—
Supplied me too with ample store of gold.
Leon. Traitor! I see it all—and do not you?
My cousin and my subject though thou art,
To solemn mortal combat I defy thee!
That from thy lips, at point of my true sword,
Admission I extort of an attempt
To slur my lady's honour:—for thy soul
No shriving knows, no healing speech with priest,
Till by confession it heaves off that sin.
Come forth!
Mari. No! no! let me be guilty thought,
But, oh! in peril place not thou thy life!
Or let me prove, myself, my innocence
By ordeal of poison or of fire;
Or take from me, of unpolluted blood,
Lucretia's proof of an unstained soul,
Unable to survive her body's shame.
Do aught but put thy life in jeopardy!
Leon. And she could injure me!
Fer. It is the trick
Of lapsed virtue to affect excess,
Which sound desert would sooner wrong itself
Than claim pretension to.
Leon. It is the trick
Of villany to lie. Come forth!
Fer. Lead on!
Mari. [*Embracing his knees.*] My lord! my lord!
my husband!
Leon. Loose thine arms! [arms.
Mari. It is mine heart-strings hold thee, not mine
Wilt snap them? If thou wilt thou hast a right,
They are thine own!—but wilt thou use that right?

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Leon. Take her away?
Mari. When fails our dearest friend,
There may be refuge with our direst foe. [*Rushing up to* FERRARDO.]
Oh! why art thou my foe? how lies my peace
Between thy good and thee? Is it thy good
To slay my peace? Wilt thou not look upon me?
Alas! thine eyes are better turn'd away!
For gazing on them, human as they are,
I have a feeling of a heart of stone!
And from my hopeless tears the spirit flies,
That frozen on my lids I feel them hang!
Thou rock! Affliction, did I plead to thee—
I turn from thee, Despair!
Leon. Come forth!
Fer. Lead on!

Enter ST. PIERRE *behind.*

Mari. No way to hold thee from thy bloody purpose?
Stop! thou wilt do a murder! Art thou sure
Thy wife is innocent? Thou know'st not what
Thou go'st to do! Whate'er befalls, the sin
Of all the deed 'tis I must answer for—
The hapless wife that on thy house and thee
Brought ruin!—have compassion on her soul,
If not upon thy own—yet hear me—stop—
I'll put an end to all!—I am—
Fer. Guilty!
Mari. No!
To save thy life—my own—and his that's heart
Unto my life—I cannot speak the lie!
Leon. And if thou couldst I'd not believe thy tongue—
Though Truth's as soon would lie.
Fer. No tongue on earth
Can clear her—she is false—to eyes and ears
Convicted!—She is an adultress!
St. P. [*Rushing forward.*] Liar!
She is as true as thou art false!
Fer. A caitiff
That robb'd me, and did put my life in peril—
But I'll be quits with him.

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Leon. Prevent him! [*Several interfere, but not until* ST. PIERRE *is wounded.*
St. P. Not
Quite home, your grace—yet near, I hope, enough!
Your highness, you do hear a dying man;
Your wife is innocent!
Fer. A poor gallant
That would not say as much!
St. P. Your highness, read
This paper! Hold his grace!
Fer. 'Twas forced from me.
St. P. Only the signature, my lord—the rest
Was voluntary—word for word—what fell
From his own lips.
Fer. You pass'd the night beside her—
Alone—none near you—within whisper of her!
Find pen to draw 'cross that!
St. P. I pray your highness,
Wears not your wife a little rustic cross,
Carved by no craftsman's hand?
Mari. I do—the same
I show'd thee when we spoke together.
St. P. 'Twas
Your brother gave it you.
Mari. It was.
St. P. I think,
Some fifteen years ago?
Mari. So many years
Have pass'd since that dear brother gave it me.
I was a child then—he almost a man!
St. P. You woke one morning, did you not, and saw
That brother standing, weeping by your bed:
He bless'd you, put that cross upon your neck,
Kiss'd you, and bade farewell to you, and went—
You never saw him more. Pray you come near!
Oh God! my mother's face!
Mari. My brother—Ambrose!
St. P. Yes, Mariana!
Fer. It's a masque, your highness,
They've got up to amuse you!

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Leon. Hence with him!
The count too!
Fer. I'm your slave, most gracious cousin,
Yet is there one thing, wherein I am free.
Leon. And what is that?
Fer. To hate thee! and I do so! [FERRARDO *and* COUNT *go out, attended.*
Mari. Brother, I said I knew thee! Thou forgot'st
Thy sister's little face to woman's grown;
But I remember'd thine enough to feel
'Twas something once had been familiar-dear!
O that my memory had better kept
What my heart treasured—thou didst prove how well!
Wilt thou not speak to me? Hear'st thou, my brother?
St. P. Our father's cottage, Mariana!
Mari. Ha!
Thou faintest!
St. P. No—it is nothing, sister!
What makes thee look so pale and vanishing?
Don't go from me!—Alas—'tis I am going!
I have confess'd myself! Pray for me, sister!
Mine eyes have lost thee!—But I feel thee still,
That's comfort!—yet—I have thee in my arms—
Thou fadest too from them—fast! fast!—thou art gone!
[ST. PIERRE *dies.*

END OF THE WIFE.

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EPILOGUE,

WRITTEN BY CHARLES LAMB.

Spoken by Miss Ellen Tree.

When first our Bard his simple will express'd,
That I should in his Heroine's robes be dress'd,
My fears were with my vanity at strife,
How I could act that untried part—a "Wife."
But Fancy to the Grison hills me drew,
Where Mariana like a wild flower grew,
Nursing her garden-kindred: so far I
Liked her condition, willing to comply
With that sweet single life: when, with a cranch,
Down came that thundering, crashing, avalanche,
Startling my mountain-project! "Take this spade,"
Said Fancy, then; "dig low, adventurous Maid,
For hidden wealth." I did; and, Ladies, lo!
Was e'er romantic female's fortune so,
To dig a life-warm lover from the—snow?

A wife and Princess see me next, beset
With subtle toils, in an Italian net;
While knavish Courtiers, stung with rage or fear,
Distill'd lip-poison in a husband's ear.
I ponder'd on the boiling Southern vein;
Racks, cords, stilettoes, rush'd upon my brain!
By poor, good, weak Antonio, too, disowned—
I dream'd each night, I should be Desdemona'd:
And, being in Mantua, thought upon the shop,
Whence fair Verona's youth his breath did stop:
And what, if Leonardo, in foul scorn,
Some lean Apothecary should suborn
To take my hated life? A "tortoise" hung
Before my eyes, and in my ears scaled "alligators" rung.
But *my* Othello, to his vows more zealous—
Twenty Iagos could not make *him* jealous!

New raised to reputation, and to life—
At your commands behold me, without strife,
Well-pleased, and ready to repeat "The Wife."

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THE

BEGGAR OF BETHNAL GREEN:

A COMEDY.—IN THREE ACTS.

ALTERED FROM THE BEGGAR'S DAUGHTER OF BETHNAL GREEN.

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DEDICATED

TO

KIRKMAN FINLAY, ESQ.

BY HIS MUCH-INDEBTED SERVANT,

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

1834.

Hosted by Google

CHARACTERS.

(AS PERFORMED AT THE VICTORIA THEATRE IN 1834.)

Queen Elizabeth	MRS. EGERTON.
Emma	MRS. OMAN HILL.
Kate	MISS P. HORTON.
Bess	MISS JARMAN.
Mrs. Trusty	MRS. GARRICK.
Lord Woodville	MR. DOYNE.
Lord Thomas Willoughby	MR. DEBAR.
Lord Wilford	MR. SHERIDAN KNOWLES.
Belmont	MR. SELBY.
Lord Mayor of London	MR. T. LEE.
Albert	MR. WYNNE.
Old Small	MR. WILLIAMS.
Young Small	MR. ABBOTT.
Peter	MR. LATHAM.
Ralph	MR. FORRESTER.
Strap	MR. CHIPPENDALE.
Chaplain	MR. MILDENHALL.
Officer	MR. WILLOUGHBY.
First Citizen	MR. YOUNG.
Second Citizen	MR. KERRIDGE.

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THE BEGGAR OF BETHNAL GREEN.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*St. Paul's.*

Enter BELMONT *and* WILFORD, *disguised as Yeomen.*

Bel. Now, Wilford, still thy comrade when at school
Or college; when 'twas peace, thy playfellow,
Thy right-hand man in war; I'm by thee still
In simple guise of honest yeoman's son,
To do the bidding of thy fantasy.
What is't?—Why are we thus attired?—What road
Are we to take? on what adventure bound?
The argument wilt thou unfold to me
Of this romance which thus we do begin?
I see thy cheek is pale—thine eye without
The gladsome light that speaks a heart at rest.
Still to my questioning hast thou replied:—
"Come, don a yeoman's coat and roam with me."—
Thy wish is done—do mine; unbosom thee,
For till I find thy heart, I lack my own.

Wilf. Remember'st thou what once thou didst rejoin,
When such, or such, if e'er I took a wife,
I said should be the fashion of my bride?—

Bel. 'Twas this:—"In vain premise or calculate,
When thou shalt fall in love. A fever that!
Sudden as intermittent, or the plague,
That comes upon you! Love by rule, forsooth!
Love by philosophy! Thou shalt be smit
In the twinkling of an eye!—infected by
A touch!—this minute sound as mountain health,

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And helpless next, as bedrid tenant of
An hospital." And hast thou proved it so?
Wilf. Attend. Last week I could not go the length
Of Ludgate Hill, but I must horse it thither.
Returning thence, a motley group of men,
Mechanics, servants, masters, old and young,
Collected round some object which they seem'd
To gaze with most admiring wonder on,
Attracted me—what think you 'twas? A maid—
A maid attired in unpretending suit
Of humble russet!—such a distance wide
Removed from any child of luxury
Or wealth, not e'en a simple ribbon knot
To grace her coif and bonnet did expend
Its chary costliness! but oh, what wealth
Had nature rain'd where fortune seem'd to grudge
The poorest drop of her enriching shower!
Sight could not take it in!—the tongue would stop
Ere it could sum it half—all terms out-run
That rate the value of known loveliness!
At thought of winning it, the heart grow wild,
As his whom more than very affluence
Doth lift from very want! There stood the maid,
Silent and motionless, with eyes on ground,
Abash'd by the reflection of herself,
Cast back upon her so on every side
From mirrors that express'd her charms indeed,
By showing her their power.
Bel. Remark'd she thee?
Wilf. She did, my restless courser startled her;
She raised her eyes, and lo! they fix'd on mine
With look, methought, of recognition, that
I felt as though our very souls embraced,
And through me ran a thrill unknown before;
When, spiteful chance! my steed more restive grew,
Defied command alike of spur or rein,
And bore me from the maid.
Bel. Ask'd you not who
She was?
Wilf. No.
Bel. No!

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Wilf. As one in jeopardy
Will lack possession of himself, nor use
Some means of succour at his very hand,
I did not think of that, till out of reach on't!
My steed at length compell'd—by whom I know not—
To check his mettle, I dismounted straight
And hasten'd back on foot, but she was gone!
If my first look of her hath been my last,
I'll never care to look on woman more!
Bel. Thy lot is cast! I told thee, Wilford, so!
To such conclusion ever comes his work
Who'd make philosophy the rule of love.
Love knows no rule, and never rule knows less
Than when obedience we'd exact from it.
'Tis an uncertain and a froward guest;
Comes to us when it lists; abides as long
As pleases it; and its own humour takes,
Whatever may be ours! You'd go in quest on't—
And lo! 'tis with you before setting out;
You'd lay down terms for its sojourning with you—
And here it is on its own terms at home;
You'd fain be rid on 't, and 'tis fain to stay;
You'd thrust it out of doors, and only find
The threshold's not your own, the moment love
Sets foot within it. Mean'st thou to seek this maid?
Wilf. Ay, through the world!
Bel. I'll help thee in the search;
And if we find the city holds her not,
As far as Rumford bear me company—
Whither, this week, perforce I must repair—
And thence, where'er thou point'st, will I be thine.
Wilf. Come on! I tell thee, if I find her not,
I'm tenant for the house the sexton builds.
[*They go out.*

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in Old Small's.*

Enter OLD SMALL.

Old S. Who'd have a son—a plague—to drive him
To hunt for, or to watch from morn till night, [mad?

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To coax, to scold, and with no better thrift
To-day, than yesterday! A lackwit, caught
By this and that, and held by nothing. Now
At bowls; next hour at cocking; presently
A race, a show, a feast, and after that
Perchance a quarrel. Anything but work.
What, Peter! Peter!

Enter PETER.

Peter. Master, here am I.
Old S. Well—my son, Peter?
Peter. He's not to be found
In all Whitechapel, seek him where I would.
I call'd in at the Cock, he wasn't there;
The Fox and Geese, but came no better speed;
The Fountain was burn'd down last Tuesday night;
The Rising Sun has stopp'd since Lady-day;
The Crown and Mitre swore at me when last
I sought him there, so thither went I not;
The Duke of Buckingham and he are out
E'er since he broke the drunken tapster's pate;
And never goes he to the Loggerheads,
Except o' Sundays.
Old S. Peter! Peter!
Peter. Master?
Old S. I sore mistrust thee, Peter.
Peter. Master! me?
Old S. Ay, by my troth, I do! mistrust thee sore!
Thou'rt in his secrets. I'll be sworn thou art.
I saw you wink to him on Sunday last,
At dinner time. Last Tuesday night, you said,
'Twas only ten when he came in; and not
A minute from the bolting of the door,
The clock struck twelve; I heard it! Wednesday noon
You took a bundle in, and said 'twas from
The laundress; when I open'd it, and found
A spendthrift cloak and jerkin, spick and span
New from the tailor's board; and, worse than that,
The whole of Thursday morning wast thou out;
And when I ask'd thee where, thou couldst not tell!
Canst tell me now?

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Peter. I went an errand, sir,
To Barbican—an errand of mine own.
Old S. An errand of thine own to Barbican!
How came I then to see thee at Mile-end?
Peter. At Mile-end, sir?
Old S. At Mile-end, sir! Thou runn'st
An errand well.
Peter. You saw me at Mile-end?
Old S. When thou wast gone to Barbican! well sir?
Peter. From Barbican I went, sir, to Mile-end,
Not finding what I sought at Barbican.
Old S. I have thee now, my piece of innocence!
My spice of honesty! my serving man,
That runs so well on errands! at Mile-end
I saw thee not, but saw thee at the foot
Of London Bridge!
Peter. The foot of London Bridge?
Old S. Ay, sir!
Peter. And where should you have seen me else?
When what I sought and miss'd at Barbican,
And miss'd again in seeking at Mile-end,
At London Bridge I found.
Old S. O didst thou so?
Would thou wast o'er the bridge! thou jackanapes!
Wast thou not too at Hackney that same time?
At Greenwich down, and Chelsea up, the Thames?
At Kensington and Islington besides?
The Tower, St. Paul's, and Westminster to boot?
Didst thou not foot, from breakfast-time till noon,
Ground that would take a man a week to ride?
Thou knave of nimble toe, but nimbler tongue!
Varlet! thou went'st not to Mile-end, nor yet
To foot of London Bridge, no more than I,
That never saw thee there! I know not where
Thou went'st, but whither thou wilt go I'll tell—
To Tyburn, sirrah! [*Knock.*] Let thy master in!
[PETER *goes out.*
His kennel never likes your chained dog,
And there are men like dogs, who loathe the thing,
Howe'er it profit them, to which you tie them;
Who, like your dog, would forfeit house and mess

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To break their chain, and forage for a bone.
What if I take the collar from his neck,
And leave him, like the prodigal of old,
To his own will, till sad experience proves
That freedom's is the bitterest mastery.
It shall be so. He cannot come to worse,
He may to better. I will do it straight.

Enter YOUNG SMALL *and* PETER.

Young S. Good morning, father.
Old S. Morning, dog! 'tis noon.
Young S. Well then, good noon.
Old S. Nor morning, noon, nor night,
Thou bring'st no good to me, so wish me none;
Where hast thou been?
Young S. Hard by, at Master All-gain's.
Old S. And what about?
Young S. Playing at loggats, sir.
Old S. At loggats? spendthrift! idler! Play at pence,
Shillings, and pounds!
Young S. I do what's next to that,—
Play for them, sir.
Old S. To lose them, cur! to lose them;
Hast thou not lost to-day?
Young S. No, by my troth.
I'm winner, save a halfpenny, by a groat,
And should have doubled that, but for foul play.
But four we wanted, and the bowl was mine:—
There stood the loggats, sir, a glorious sight,
And only four to get! and here stood I—
There's not a lad in all Whitechapel, sir,
Is such a hand at loggats—here stood I,
With victory in hand, sure as the bowl
With which I thus took aim—a steady aim
Is half the game at loggats, sir—you'll mind
We wanted only four; the bowl was mine.
There stood the loggats; here stood I—they say
I have an air at loggats—thus I stand,
My left leg planted like a buttress, so—
My body poised upon the right, with knee

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Bent neither more nor less;—I'd like you, sir,
To see me play at loggats—look, sir—
Old S. Pshaw!
Come, throw the bowl, and make an end.
Young S. An end
I should have made on't, had I thrown the bowl.
Old S. What hindered thee?
Young S. A needle-full of thread!
A nail of tape! a button mould! a piece
Of list! the vapour of a smoothing-board!
Thus, as I said, I held the bowl—'twas all
But thrown. Ne'er out of cannon-mouth look'd shot
More certain of its aim, than from my hand,
The bowl look'd at the loggats. In a twink
Six of the nine at least were lying low.
"Stop!" cries a snivelling tailor; "Master Small,
'Tis not your turn to play"—the pair of shears,
To clip me so, and thus cut up the game!
Old S. Now mark me, Thomas Small; thou'rt
What art thou master of? [twenty-one:
Young S. Of quarter-staff,
Rackets and fives.—I'm capital at fives!—
Hop but the ball, I'm sure to make it fly
Like bullet from a gun.—I play at bowls
And quoits.—At quoits I'm famous for a ringer!
And then I'll putt the stone with any one.
Old S. Master thou art, I know, of idleness;
But name to me the craft thou art master of.
Art fit to be a turner?
Young S. Burn the lathe!
Old S. A cooper?
Young S. Sooner I'd be staved to death!
Old S. A smith?
Young S. As 'lieve you'd hammer out my brains!
Old S. A tailor?
Young S. Slay me with a needle first!
Old S. What then art fit to be?
Young S. A gentleman.
Old S. A gentleman! Thou scarce canst read!
Young S. What then?
That's nothing in a gentleman.

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Old S. Thou writ'st—
But such a hand, the clerk's a cunning one
That makes it out.
Young S. That's like a gentleman.
Old S. Thou canst not cipher: hand thee in a bill
Of twenty items, and 'twill puzzle thee
To add it up.
Young S. That's quite the gentleman.
Father, thou truly said'st I'm twenty-one,
And he that's twenty-one by law's a man:
So I'm a man, and as a man am free,
I'm master now of handsome twenty pounds,
Left to me by my godfather; to them
Add thou what grace thy graciousness may please,
And in my own way let me try the world.
Old S. Thou'rt like a wayward horse that will not break;
The training thee's all labour, profit none,—
And thrift of fruitless toil's to give it up.
Thy will would have thee free before thine age;
Thine age, like false friend, now doth back thy will;
Both are too strong for me, and I must yield.
Wait for me. I'll be with you presently.
[OLD SMALL *goes out.*
Young S. Does he consent, and am I free indeed!
New bonds I fear'd to curb me in new rights,
And he takes off the old.—I thrive apace.
Most hopeful setting out! So fair begun
Must needs fair ending have.
Peter. You play'd that game
Of loggats passing well.
Young S. I play'd a game—
But not at loggats, Peter. Never more
I'll play at loggats! Peter, nought I've done
But walk since morning up and down Cheapside,
Feasting my eyes on ladies of the court
And its precincts, that come to bargain there.
O Peter, homely are the silks they wear
To their more silken looks! A city coif
Hath twice their pride! No tossing of the head;
No turning of the shoulder in disdain;

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But eyes that drop when they your glances catch,
As if to let you gaze! Peter, I'll make
My fortune!
Peter. Prithee, how?
Young S. Now try and guess.
Peter. I could not guess, were I to try a week.
Young S. Peter, thou canst be shrewd. Look at me, Peter;
Scan me from head to foot. Premising, now,
Thou knew'st me not, would'st take me for the son
Of Gilbert Small, the pin-maker?
Peter. More like
I'd take you for the son of Walter Husk,
The baker, to the east of Aldersgate.
Young S. A baker's son! a crust hath pith as much
As thou hast wit. Take me for son of him!
Peter. He's tall, and so art thou.
Young S. What's tall?—What's tall?
Pronounce me son unto a barber's pole,
For it is tall! To say a man is tall
Is nothing, Peter! Look at me again,
And guess what way I'll make my fortune. There,—
I fancy that's a leg.
Peter. It is a leg.
Young S. And thereunto's a foot.
Peter. Yea is there, of
A verity.
Young S. Go to; you flatter now.
You think me vain; but I am not vain, although
I have a leg and foot,—ay, and a face
Moreover.
Peter. Certainly thou hast a face.
He'd have a face who'd say thou hadst not one.
Young S. Thou hast a wit, good Peter. Show thee but
A thing, thou see'st it.

Enter OLD SMALL *unperceived.*

Look at my waist.
Now lift your eye a little farther up,
And ponder how my shoulders spread. Dost see?

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Now on the whole—to speak it modestly—
Taking me altogether, am I not
A very personable man? Now, Peter,
How shall I make my fortune?—Why, you fool!
By love!

Old S. [*coming forward.*] Who marries thee, loves not herself:
She goes a voyage in a fair-weather bark,
That scuds while wind and wave do favour it,
But in itself hath no sea-worthiness
To stand their buffeting! Here, have thy wish;
Thou'lt find no niggard hand has fill'd that purse.
I give it thee to feed thy wantonness;
But, e'en for that, I'd have thee chary on't.
There's not a piece in it but is made up
Of grains of fractions, every one of which
Was slowly gather'd by thy father's thrift,
And hoarded by his abstinence! It holds
How many minutes torn from needful sleep!
How many customary wants denied!
How many throbs of doubting—sighs of care,
Laid out for nothing, in thy waywardness!
But take it with a blessing—Fare thee well!
Thou never yet couldst suit thee, Thomas, to
Thy father's house; but, should there come the time,
Thou know'st the door, that still was open to thee.

[Old Small *goes out.*

Young S. Peter, I'll stay at home. The good old man!
He loves me, Peter. Take him back the purse,
And say I'll stay at home.

Peter. And keep at home?
Wait like his ledger on the desk?

Young S. I will!
That is, I would.

Peter. And follows, *if I could.*

Young S. I fear it does.

Peter. What's got, restored, may not be got again.

Young S. Peter, you counsel like an oracle.

Peter. You've rubb'd your eyes till they are red.

Young S. Indeed?

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Peter. Look in the glass.
Young S. A pity not to make
My fortune, Peter! Give me back my purse.
I'll make my fortune. Go and get my trunk,
And bring it after me to Cripplegate.
Thou said'st, as I came in, thy place was lost
On my account. I'll find thee in a new one.
[PETER *goes out.*
There's no controlling fate; and fate, I see,
By love has destined me to make my fortune.
So farewell to my father's house! I could
Be sad at bidding it good-bye—but will not.
I'll think on nought but how we'll meet again,
When love fulfils what fate decrees for me:
Bids Thomas Small a golden wedding hail,
And sends him home a very gentleman!
[YOUNG SMALL *goes out.*

SCENE III.—*An Apartment in Albert's House.*

Enter ALBERT *and* EMMA.

Emma. Why sigh'st thou, Albert?
Al. This hath troubled me.
On Thursday, said'st thou?
Emma. Yes.
Al. I recollect!
I recollect!—Was't not on Ludgate Hill?
Emma. On Ludgate Hill.
Al. It was. I recollect
She grasp'd my arm, as with the start, methought,
Of sudden fear, which I accounted for,
As at the self-same moment heard I near
The furious prancing of a fiery steed!
Rode he a steed?
Emma. He did.
Al. Then 'twas for him!
The image, say'st thou, of my likeness—ere
That fatal field which robb'd me of my sight—
New given to thee?

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Emma. So did she say.
Al. Where is
That likeness?
Emma. In her custody. 'Twas that
Betray'd to me the secret of her heart;
She pray'd it from me. Of its costly case
Despoil'd, I gave it her—and wonder'd still
To find her gazing on't, with looks that spoke
A passion more than filial, that did vent
Itself in very tears! the which her breast,
Unwonted heaving, seem'd with sighs to number!
Al. Such things I've heard.
Emma. What, Albert?
Al. I have heard
That subtle passion from a glance hath sprung,
Hath in a moment taken root so deep,
Years could not pluck it up; but in the heart
It grew and grew, though beam of sunny hope
Did never fall upon it. Mark'd she how
He was attired?
Emma. A yeoman did he seem. [thing
Al. That hope is quench'd:—of prouder state, this
That seems a weed, had haply proved a flower!
Emma. I prithee, Albert, how?
Al. That brother, who,
Unnatural, my lands confiscate seized,
'Tis said is father to a goodly son,
The very image of his uncle dead,
As they believe me. Hope did kindle up,
That son it was she saw. That hope is quench'd!
He seem'd a yeoman? For this malady
We have a medicine—the knowledge of
Our real state, which still we've hidden from her.
That she shall know to-morrow.
Emma. Tell it her,
And quit this wayward life. Thou'st laid by store
Enough. Forsake the land which thee forsakes;
Another one makes thee a franchised man,
Far from the ban of this. There may'st thou take
Thy title, in thy own land forfeited,
And for our fair child find befitting mate.

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Al. I will not—cannot quit my native land!
Bann'd as I am, 'tis precious to me still.
It is my father's land—'tis loved for that;
'Tis thine—thy child's—it should be loved for you;
It should be loved, if only for itself!
'Tis free, it hath no despot, but its laws!
'Tis independent; it can stand alone;
'Tis mighty 'gainst its enemies; 'tis one!
Where can I find the land the like of it?
Its son, though under ban and forfeiture,
Is envied. He's the brother of the free!
No! no! I cannot quit my native land.
For sight of other land I would not give
The feeling of its breath—the wall of him
That does not forfeit it, which none may scale,
However proud, unscathed, to do him wrong!
I cannot—will not—quit my native land.

Emma. Then let us seek some quiet corner on't;
Nor spend on thriftless hope, what, husbanded
By wise content, would keep us more than rich.

Al. Nor can I that. Who sees his house pull'd down,
And does not strive to build it up again?
Who sees his vessel sunk, and does not look
For other hull to plough the waves anew?
I cannot do't! I've lived on the high seas
Of restless life; I would be on them still.
Say I'm unfit for't—I'd be near them still.
The sailor, maim'd or superannuate,
Seeks not an inland home; but near some cliff
His hammock slings, in hearing of the surge
He wont to cleave of yore. Come, lead me forth.
Where's Bess?

Emma. An errand gone to Aldersgate.

Al. I would again she went not forth alone;
My heart hath strange misgivings touching her.
Bold men infest our streets, who would not stop,
By might to take what right refuses them;
Like him who late, with his pernicious suit,
Did hurt her tender ear.

Strap. [*Without.*] What! hoa!

Al. Come in,

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Whose challenge is unwelcome, yet a friend's.
Is it not honest Master Strap?

Enter STRAP.

Strap. The same,
Master of cobbling, as thy shoes do show,
Which seek his lapstone old, and leave it new—
But to the matter, as they say?
Al. What is't?
Strap. Why, this it is—a truth as old as time—
Grief hath this soother, 'tis not solitary,
But, if 'twill look for't, finds its fellow grief.
So does the wise man teach. Thou know'st I lost
My daughter, Sunday week; she did not die:
Romances drove the giddy vixen mad,
And she eloped from me. For loss of her
I have ne'er been sober since! No comforter
Like ale—save sack; but sack's for rich men's cares.
—Your friends!—Says one, "It might have fallen out
One, that it might be evil, sent for good; [worse;"
One, that the plague itself will have an end;
And some did pity; some did scold; and some
Did try to laugh me out of sorrowing.
As twenty ways there are to mend a shoe
Besides the soling, heeling, welting on't.
Al. But what is this to us?
Strap. Philosophy!
If not philosophy, a moral, then—
And if not that, why, then, a hint that thou
Hast lost thy daughter, just as I have mine.
Emma. Have lost our daughter!
Strap. With a difference, though—
Al. Nay—
Emma. Prithee, Albert, give him his own way;
He's sure at last to take it; so we lose
Our time, persuading him to progress ours.—
Well.
Strap. I did say there was a difference,
But what of that? This road and that do meet—
Take which you will, you come to the same end.
It matters not, my daughter, with her will,

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Thine against hers, is gone, since both alike
Are lost.

Al. How? where? who forced our child away?

Strap. A gallant, who behemm'd her in the street,
With good a score of lusty followers,
Flush'd swaggerers, that seem'd of no account
To reckon lawless deeds! I heard a rout
And left my stall. There was she in the midst;
Some following with outcry 'gainst the deed—
But none with hand that dared to question it.
Upon my child I thought, at sight of thine—
Thought of thy loss mine own brought home to me—
My brain was swimming, and I rush'd on him
That held her—but a fillip laid me down!
Yet, brief as was the scuffle, and the end
Untoward, profit came of it. This ring
He wore, though how he left it in my hand
I know not.

Al. Give it me!—A jewel hath it!
Yes! 'Tis no common ring. Perhaps a clue
To trace the ravisher? Give me a sword,
Get me a knife—a dagger!—any thing,
So that it be a weapon! Wretched man!
Why don't I ask you first to get me eyes!
Sight of my heavy wrong, put out the thought
Of what must help me to revenge my wrong!
Oh, heavy loss! To have a father's heart—
To have a father's arm to second it,—
And both be useless for the lack of sight!
The Queen! The Queen!

Strap. Wouldst see the Queen? Then straight
Repair to Temple Bar; she doth commence
To-day a Royal Progress; there will wait
To hear the greeting of the mayor and citizens.

Al. Lead on! My child! my child! Whate'er
This hour will I unfold myself, and find, [betide,
One way or other, period to my cares.
Know'st thou where dwells a notary on the way?
Conduct me to him.—On!—We'll meet our death
Or find our child.—On! on! Our child! Our child!

[*They go out.*

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SCENE IV.—*The Street.*

Enter YOUNG SMALL *and* PETER *newly attired.*

Young S. There!—said I not we should be late and lose
The setting out, wherein we might have mix'd
Unnoticed with the royal cavalcade;
And all through fault of thee, that took'st such time
To apparel thee—no doubt with wonderment
At such surpassing gear.—Let's breathe awhile.—
Peter, thou'lt ruin me! Is that a way
For serving-man to carry him?—Consider—
Thy master, Peter, is a gentleman.

Peter. To keep in mind on't do I all I can.

Young S. I say thou dost not, else would it appear.

Peter. It shall appear.

Young S. See that it do so then—
Especially when thou dost go abroad.
Then carry thus thy head, stand with an air;
Walk with a gait, as thou wast somebody;
And when thou speak'st, thou must speak up, like one
That values not who hears;—but not to me.
To me, good Peter, do thou none of these!
Speak small to me; wear thus thy head to me;
Stand thou not with an air when I am by;
Nor, when my eye's upon thee, move with gait
Of somebody! Thou'rt ever nobody
In presence of thy master!—minding still
To bear thee like a gentle serving-man.

Peter. I'll mind.

Young S. And do so!—And remember too
When I do sit, and thou dost wait on me,
Thou layest not thy hand upon my chair.
But stand at distance from't—nor yet in line,
But good a foot behind the rearmost leg;
Not in advance of that a barley-corn!
And balance not thy body on one leg,
With knee of t'other negligently bent,
As if it said "I care not!" 'Tis not meet.

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But stand on both, as every joint of thee
Did know me for thy master—not astride,
But heel to heel!—And keep thy finger from
Thy button-hole—but not to cram it in
Thy poke! Nor yet on hip to rest it—'twere
As thou wouldst say, "I think myself a lord!"
Thou wouldst not fold thine arms! Field-marshal, Peter,
Could do no more—do nothing with thine arms,
But let them hang! There! Seem'st thou now indeed
A serving-man.

Peter. Will that content you?

Young S. Yes.

But mark! Thou hast play'd with me at quoits and loggats,
No more of that!

Peter. I'll mind.

Young S. And when I have order'd me a tankard out,
And given it thee to hold, thou more than once
Hast quaff'd it off to my good luck.—Be sure
No more of that!

Peter. I'll try and mind. But, sir—
Since so I must accost thee—what avail
The gait and air of gentle serving-man,
Without the pocket should belong to one?
Look there!

Young S. What's there?

Peter. A melancholy rap!
A black-faced copper sixpence! Add to which
A button without shank, and you sum up
The pocket of your gentle serving-man!
I ne'er can do without allowances.

Young S. Allowances!—What wages got you from
My father, Peter?

Peter. 'Twere a cunning clerk
Could count them,—purse was never made would wear
With hoarding them. To coin them took it not
Gold, silver, no nor brass. I served him for
My bed and board, that board and bed were none,
But shifts for them; a jerkin in the year
And doublet; old apparel new made up;
Hose, when the feet had walk'd away from them;

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Shoes, whose last mending had the cobbler brought
To his last wits; and hat that gaped to see
Its crown was gone; with what good luck besides
Might send me.
Young S. And thou nam'st allowances!
Do I not promise thee a pound a-year?
Jerkin and doublet to provide thee with,
The thirtieth penny on the counter rung
The knell of half-a-crown! Hose got I thee,
With feet unto them, newly vamp'd and darn'd!
And from the cordiner himself direct
Wast thou not shod? Nor was thy head forgot.
With thy well-furnish'd trunk to make it match,
Did I not treat it to a crown-whole hat,
Nor yet at outlay stopp'd, so ruinous,
But in the hat a comely feather stuck,
At charge of twice a groat? No more of this!
Believe when thou'rt well off.—There's twopence for thee,
To show thee that thou serv'st a gentleman!
Dream'st thou sometimes?
Peter. I do.
Young S. What's the best dream
A man can dream?
Peter. They say 'tis hanging.
Young S. So!
Didst thou not dream of hanging yesternight?
Peter. I did.
Young S. Thy dream's come out! Thy fortune's made
But knew'st thou it—come on! Content thee, and
Thou shalt have pence! Mind how thou bear'st thyself!
Well done! But keep to that! So.—Follow me.
[*They go out.*

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SCENE V.—*Temple Bar.*

The Houses on each side adorned with cloths of silk or velvet, gold or silver, hanging from the upper windows.—A crowd of Citizens, *men and women, assembled.*

Officer. Stand back, sirs! stand back there, I say! —Why press ye forward?—Back there! back! Keep order till her highness pass.

First Citizen. Will it be long, sir, ere she come?

Officer. To answer that I must know the measure of your patience. Stretches it to some five minutes hence, I dare warrant you she will be here quickly; for 'tis a quarter and upwards beyond the time she appointed to set out from Westminster.

Second Citizen. Is't to Norwich, sir, her highness makes her progress this time? [*Shouts without.*

Officer. To Norwich 'tis, sir.—Peace! her highness comes. Each keep his place, nor press upon the other, so one and all will see the sight. Here comes the lord mayor, with the aldermen and council, to greet her highness. More room!—stand back! stand back!

Enter the Lord Mayor, *&c. Enter Procession through the Gates; Soldiers, Gentlemen Pensioners, Band of Gentlemen, Band of Knights, Band of Barons, Trumpeters and Heralds. The* Queen, *accompanied by Ladies, closed up with Guards.—The* Lord Mayor, *&c., advance and kneel to the* Queen.

Mayor. May't please your majesty, with duteous knees,
That for our loving and right loyal hearts
Do truly vouch, as would our tongues for both;
Our happy privileges, of the which
Your gracious sceptre the high guardian is,
Thus lowly at your highness' feet we lay;
And with fair greeting, pray to welcome you
To your good city here of London.

Queen. Freely
Do we accept your greeting, citizens
Of London; of our loyal cities, chief;

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The princess fair of commerce, that defies
The world to show her peer ; whose merchantmen
Do throng the seas with gallant fleets, the which
To float, the treasuries of kings might brag !
The privileges, at our feet you lay,
We pray you to resume : and truly guard
For her behoof, who, in her subjects' weal,
Doth love to boast she still locks up her own.

Mayor. Our duties ever on your highness wait !

Queen. Proceed.

Albert. [*without.*] The queen ! the queen!—Where!—
Where's the queen ?

Officer. Stand back !

Queen. Make way !—Who calls upon the queen ?

Officer. So please your majesty, a beggar-man !
Stand back !

Albert. The queen ! the queen !

Officer. Stand back, I say !

Queen. Hold, sirrah! Dare not stop my subjects' way
That come in suffering to me ! Did I—when
My right did crown me, and I pass'd along,
My way beset with subjects, that more thick
Did throng me with their blessings than their eyes—
My chariot frequent stay, that I might take
Their gifts of nosegays from poor women's hands,
And shall I now pass on, nor stop to hear
A poor man's prayer ! Approach, whate'er thou art !

[*The Officer makes way for* ALBERT, *who enters.*

Albert. [*presenting a scroll.*] Lead—lead me to her
highness' feet ! [*Kneels.*
Justice, great queen !—Justice and mercy !

Queen. How !
Mercy doth stay the hand of justice ; justice
Prevent the hand of mercy.—Ask'st thou, then,
For both ?

Albert. For mercy I'd implore for one,
Whose high offence hath long contrition half
Atoned for,—half, the loss of sight—his just
And heavy penalty for swerving duty !
Justice I'd ask on one, whose daring wrong,
In open day, hath robb'd me of my child—

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A virgin, gracious queen, of beauty rare,
Although her father's eyes ne'er vouch'd for it!
Queen. But went she of her will?
Albert. No! no!—by force
Just now!—i' th' public street! in open day!
Torn from her parents, whither know they not—
A mother that in him, who should protect
Her child and her, doth only find a charge!
A father, with the limb and heart of one,
Still without eyes is heartless—lopp'd of limb—
At least to succour those that cleave to him!
O royal maiden, take a maiden's part,
And, for her wrong, o'erlook the wrong might stand
Betwixt thy justice and her injury!
Queen. Thy tears, old man, do better serve than sparks,
To kindle up our wrath! Know'st thou the name
Of the offender?
Albert. No.
Queen. Nor rank?
Albert. Nor rank—
Unless a ring—which, in a scuffle that
Befel with one who tried to take her part,
Came from the finger of the ravisher—
Serve as a clue to find him.
Queen. Show it us!
This ring is not a stranger to us! Ha!
Waits in our train Lord Thomas Willoughby?
Wood. No, gracious mistress.
Queen. Read this document; [*Gives* ALBERT'S *scroll.*
Advise him straight of its contents; and add
Command that on receipt, with prompt despatch,
He lead the beggar's daughter to our feet—
His wedded bride!
What to thyself alone relates, we'll at
Our leisure learn; what to thy child, at once
We'll give our care to. Instruct us by what name
Thou now art known, or title?
Albert. The Blind Beggar
Of Bethnal Green.
Queen. Thy daughter's name?

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Albert. 'Tis Bess.
Queen. Our own!—Of beauty rare, thou say'st?
Albert. Most rare!
Queen. And good?
Albert. Most good.
Queen. [*to Attendant.*] Look to that sightless man!
Whither we go,
Our pleasure 'tis he waits upon us. On!
The glory it shall be of Bess's reign
Her lowest subject, if his cause is right,
Hath 'gainst her highest odds; for, beggar e'en,
He still shall have his queen to side with him!
[*They go out.*

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Room in an Inn at Romford.*

Enter Hostess *and* RALPH.

Hostess. Now have I told thee all—how she came here
On Tuesday night, sore faint and travel-worn,
When thou at Epping wast upon the roam;
How from her home by bold and lawless men
She had been forced; how she escaped their hands;
How, when she reach'd her parents' roof again,
Deserted 'twas,—its tenants doubtless gone
In quest of her; how, knowing not what way
To go, she put her trust in Heaven to guide her,
Which brought her to our door!
Ralph. Inform'd she thee
Who were her parents?
Hostess. No; I ask'd, but saw
The question troubled her, so ask'd no more.
I see thou think'st her fair. Now, mark me, Ralph.
Thou'rt less sedate, I know, than thou art wild,—

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I also think there's in thy heart a check
Of ruth and honesty, that draws thee back
When passion 'cross their bounds would have thee wing.
Thou hast a shrewd conception, too, of life
Beyond thy station and thy years, my son;
Beware then, Ralph, her beauty tempt thee not
To do her wrong! She's poor. She has not friend
Of right she here can call so—has not home,
Save what a stranger's roof supplies her with;
The labour of her hands is all her means;
Her virtue is their strength; who'd rob them on't
Were he my son, he were not villain only,
But coward mean to boot.

Ralph. Nay, mother, nay,
I'm not that lackgrace yet! Give thou consent,
I'm wived to-morrow for sweet Bessy's sake.

Hostess. I'll think on't, Ralph; meantime bestir thee, son;
Look to the gentleman, since Wednesday last
Took up his quarters here.

Ralph. The gentleman?
My shoe's a gentleman!

Hostess. How, sirrah! this
Thy manners?

Ralph. Mother, I did overhear——

Hostess. Didst what? I'll have no list'ners in my house,
No eaves-droppers! no ears that wait on key-holes!
Who take their quarters up at the Queen's Arms,
Shall have their secrets, as their luggage, safe!
Fie on thee, Ralph, no more on't! mind thyself!
Thy mother's hard-earn'd gains not more were won
By thrift than honesty; whom they enrich
Must honest be as thrifty. So be thou.
My son is he, not of my blood that's drop,
But portion of my heart.—Not so—I'd take
A hind that is, to be thy mother's heir.

[RALPH *goes out.*

All's right and tidy,—each thing in its place,
And cleverly put out of hand. No cup,
Tankard, or flagon, but its face might show

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To polished silver, rich and bright as 'tis.
There's sure a virtue in her touch, that leaves
All things it meets as ne'er they look'd before!
Luck hath she brought with her. Since here she came,
No house in Romford holds its head so high
As the Queen's Arms, for balm of sparkling ale,
Cordial of sack, and nectar of bright wine!
Would she were wife to Ralph! We cannot hope
To keep the treasure long that's coveted
By all who see it, and by right's not ours;
But yet who is she?—Ralph's my son, and heir
To good a hundred pounds a-year, besides
His father's house and land. Her courtesy might
An heiress' self vouchsafe to make to Ralph.
When he should wed, I ever look'd, at least,
To give my blessing to some doctor's, squire's,
Or curate's daughter. Wed him shall I to
One knows not whom?—I'll question her more close.
His father, when he wived, took home his match,
And so must he. She comes. [BESS *sings without.*
No need to keep
Blackbird or thrush, while she is in the house.
So sweet and active is her pretty throat.
What's that she looks thus constant at, whene'er
She thinks herself alone; but when observed
Doth ever quickly nestle in her breast?

Enter BESS *with her father's picture, which she frequently examines while she sings.*

The blind man's at the door,
And won't you let him in?
He plays the harp, he'll spare no pains,
Your favour for to win.
He'll sing you fits, one, two, or three,
And he'll ask you a groat—no more;
And, grudge you a groat, he'll be thankful for less—
The blind man's at the door.

He'll sing you stories sad,
He'll sing you stories gay;
And call as often as you please,
He will not say you nay.

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If you fill him a cup, he's a happy blind man,
As oft he has been before;
But, grudge you that grace, he's contented with none—
The blind man's at the door.

The blind man's at the door,
And shelter none has he;
The sky doth smile, or it doth frown,
But which he cannot see!
If you welcome him in, what cares he for the sky?
It may shine, or it may pour;
But, grudge you that grace, wet or dry he must on!—
The blind man's at the door.

[*At the conclusion of the song the* Hostess *approaches and steals a look at the picture.*

Hostess. Whose picture is that, my Bess?
Bess. My father's.
Hostess. Then
Was never father better loved than thine!
Nay, blush not, that thou lovest thy father well!
Show't me. He is a father to be loved!
No wonder thou shouldst keep it next thy heart;
I well could take't to mine. Thou blushest more
And more. Thou silly wench! There put it up.
I like to hear thee sing, my pretty Bess;
'Tis gladness to my heart! Art happy, Bess,
To live with me?
Bess. As far as happiness
Can live with Bess,—her parents lost—herself
Unable to provide her home or friend.
Hostess. Not so, my pretty Bess! Herself can best
Provide her these. No customer that comes
To the Queen's Arms, and hath unmistress'd house,
But would be glad if Bess its mistress were—
Knew he her history.
Bess. [*Aside.*] Her history!
Hostess. One likes to know
Whence people come—who people are—their birth
And parentage. Wast thou a lady born,
I could not love thee better than I do.

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But loving thee so well, I'd know who 'tis
So well I love. Who art thou, pretty Bess?
Bess. [*Aside.*] If I do say I am a beggar's child,
The door that took me in may thrust me out!
If aught beside, I speak what is not truth,
And that I'll never speak!—You think me good;
You find me willing—useful in the house—
Not knowing who I am. To teach you that
More good, more willing, useful, makes me not;
Then do not seek to know't. I dare be bound,
If cause I give you not for more content,
I'll give you none for less.
Hostess. Where mystery is,
Doubt is. We hide what we do fear to show.
If I do come of honest kind, care I
Who knows my father's name? I'd cry it from
The steeple top! To be a friend, we needs
Must find a friend. My friend is she alone
That trusts me. If my love's not worth as much,
Better I keep it to myself. Fair brow
Thou hast, and open too! I ween thy heart's
As fair—but why is't not as open, Bess?—
Why, whither goest thou?
Bess. [*Who while the* Hostess *has been speaking has put on her cloak and bonnet.*] I know not—but
I know I must go hence! You're right—'tis fit
One know whom they do lodge—whom they do love;
'Tis little to ask that! Alas for them
That are not masters of so small a boon!
They may be question'd—wonder were they not.
They may be doubted—they cannot complain.
They may lack friend—they've but themselves to blame.
Farewell—thanks! thanks! much thanks!—'Twas all a gift!
The wind and rain, on which you shut the door
That let me in, had just as much a right
To enter it as I. I'm rested now,
Refresh'd and strengthen'd—every foot I go
I'll bless you that I am so!
Hostess. Leave me, Bess!
That shalt thou never! Give me off thy cloak!

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Prevent me not!—thy bonnet I'll untie,
Or never more may I tie on my own!
Ah! Bess, dost mind me? care I who thou art?
Or doubt I thee? or am I not thy friend?
Nay, if thou leavest the house, I leave it too!
I'll have no house that does not roof thy head!
For ever live with me! [*Embraces her.*] Want'st thou a right?
A right then shalt thou have. Ralph loves thee, Bess,—
Whoe'er thou art, thou shalt be wife to Ralph!
Nay, answer not! I say I'll have it so!
See if I love thee now! Here's company—
I'll look to them. Go dry thine eyes, sweet Bess!
Thou shalt be daughter, wife, and all, my Bess.
[*They go out severally.*

SCENE II.—*A Private Room in the Queen's Arms.*

Enter RALPH.

Ralph. Look to thy birthright, Ralph;—avails it not
To be thy mother's son that nature made,
Thou must be offspring of her humour too!
Is't fault of thine that thou art not a wall?
That thou dost hear, when men before thee tell
Their loose-kept secrets! Gentlemen, forsooth!
My gentleman's gentleman! the scrub of him!
The helper o' the scrub! a rap, was nail'd
To some vile counter, has been taken thence,
And the base metal coin'd anew, to pass
For piece of honest gold! 'T won't pass with me!
He trusts to make his fortune by the priest—
Of some rich dame the favour sweet to win—
And thereunto he follows the queen's court;
But stopping, on his way, at Romford, here
Sets eye upon the linnet I would lime,
And tarries at our house. But, lest he spoil
My sport, I've pointed out the bush to him
Where sits a goldfinch—but a painted one—

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Our Kate, that's vow'd to wed a gentleman—
Our chambermaid, to seek her fortune, come
Like him to Romford, and alighted here.
Her do I palm on him for noble maid,
Heiress of gold and lands, from forced match
Escaped, and crouching here in humble guise
To shun pursuit.—Ha! here she comes!—Good day.

Enter KATE.

Sweet Kate.

Kate. Hold off! I'm Kate too sweet for thee!

Ralph. Indeed! when do we call thee wife, sweet Kate?

Kate. When thou hold'st stirrup to my husband!

Ralph. How!

Will nothing less content thee? Marry, Kate
Marry thy match, or count to die a maid.

Kate. My match is he that fits my thought, not thine.

Ralph. Thy match is he that fits thy fortune, Kate.

Kate. Not so, when I my fortune am above.

Ralph. Their fortune who're above, oft fall below.

Kate. Leave me to look to that.

Ralph. Look to it, then,
Thy new year's gift I'll double for thee, Kate,
If ere the year comes round, thou curtsey not
The wife of honest hind.

Kate. The hind I'll wed
Thou'lt touch thy bonnet to.

Ralph. Ay, shall I, Kate,
When he to me doffs his.

Kate. Doffs his to thee!
He first shall doff his head!

Ralph. Nay, Kate, be friends!
Not only do I wish thee well to wed,
But, if I could, would help thee, pretty Kate;
And I can help thee if thou'rt in the mood.

Kate. What! in the mood to help thee to a jest?

Ralph. Thyself be judge! The gentleman came here
On Wednesday,—he throws glances at thee, Kate—
Is that a jest? I've heard, thy cousin, Kate,
Was cousin's cousin to the cousin of

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An earl, sweet Kate—I've told him so, Is that
A jest? Thou know'st how windfalls come—how men,
Were ragged knaves one day, the next has seen
To strut as robed lords—how oft the tree
Of noble family hath wither'd, branch
By branch, till none to bear its honours left,
They're gone to cover some poor distant graft,
The parent stock ne'er threw its shadow on!
Why may't not hap to thee?—I think it may—
I wish it may—and as 'tis easy, Kate,
To fancy what we wish, I've told him, Kate,
To titles and revenues thou art heir!
Is that a jest? Let but thy bearing back
My giving out, I'd marvel not if ere
A quarter of a year—a month—a week,
I doff my bonnet to thy spouse indeed.
Is that a jest?

Kate. Ralph, thou'rt an honest lad!

Ralph. When thou repair'st to church, may I, sweet Kate,
Make bold to kiss thee when the knotting's done?

Kate. I shall not mind, for old acquaintance, Ralph,

Ralph. And when thou'rt married, may I sometimes call?

Kate. Ay, may'st thou, Ralph.

Ralph. How often?—Once a year?

Kate. I'll not be angry, Ralph, if it be twice.

Ralph. How kind thou art!—and when I call, sweet Kate,
Wilt bid the lackey ask me in?

Kate. I will.

Ralph. And order Master Ralph a cup of sack,
To drink thy health, while in the hall he stands?

Kate. As sure as I shall be a lady, Ralph.

Ralph. Thou shalt be married to a gentleman!
And here he comes—Observe him, bonny Kate,
The visage, figure, habit, air, and walk
Of gentleman! To note his only gait
A man would say, or he lack'd brains, there goes
At least a handsome thousand pounds a year!
When thou shalt call him spouse! Away, my Kate.

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Don thou a smoother 'kerchief—change thy cap
For thy Sunday one, with bows as broad and red
As full-blown peonies! and soon as done
Come back again, when thou shalt find him here,
And troll that pretty song you sang to us
On Tuesday night—as though you mark'd him not.
Love in his heart be sure hath taken root—
See how I'll make it grow and come to fruit!
Bear thee as lofty gentlewoman, Kate;
Go proudly, Kate, and not as chambermaid!
Of maids thou shalt be mistress!—Well done, Kate!
[KATE *goes out*
Here comes indeed, my gentleman, from top
To toe new-furnish'd as on conquest bent.
[*Retires up stage.*

Enter YOUNG SMALL.

Young S. Debate it thus. What's love? It is not land
Or gold; 'tis not attire or tenement;
Or meat or drink. What is the worth on't then?
Nothing! it makes not wise—for these are things
That wise men covet, and 'twould counsel me
To part with them; it makes not great—great men
Hath love undone: 'Tis not content—I ne'er
Saw lover yet but he was woe-begone!
Its signs are willows, darts, and bleeding hearts!
I'll none on't, I'm resolved! Sweet mistress Bess!
Ralph. Sweet mistress Kate thou mean'st.
Young S. Right, master Ralph.
Yet mistress Bess is sweet! But what of that?
'Tis fit a gentleman a lady wed—
So Kate's the maid for me. I'll conquer love!
Love's no small thing to conquer. Men fall sick
For love, go mad for love! hang, drown themselves—
But love doth meet its match when it meets me!
You see I'm ready, Ralph.
Ralph. I see you are.
Ay, that's the way to go a-wooing.
Young S. What,
It strikes you?

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Ralph. Yes!
Young S. The jerkin's a new cut,
Or else the tailor's perjured—oath he took
It should be made as never jerkin was!
Ralph. His oath he has kept!
Young S. You mark my doublet too?
Ralph. Else lack'd I eyes.
Young S. And how the sleeves are slash'd?
Ralph. 'Tis slashing work indeed! She must have heart
Of stone, gives she not.
Young S. A fine effect!
And then my hat—what think you of the set?
Ralph. A gallant set—a very gallant set,
Most valiantly turn'd up.
Young S. The feather red!
Blood red! and nearly of a rapier's length;
The loop of warlike steel, that, what with loop,
Feather, and set, methinks it is a hat
Cries—"Touch me not."
Ralph. Methinks it is.
Young S. 'Twas made
To special order.
Ralph. So 'twould seem.
Young S. You know
They like a gallant bearing. I would look
A very Hector, when I go to woo!
Ralph. And thou hast hit it.
Young S. On your honour, now?
Ralph. Else never man hit anything.
Young S. Indeed!
I thank you, master Ralph. I'm glad you're pleased.
You have a taste! Beshrew me but you have!
How would you have me wear my rapier? So?
Or so?
Ralph. Why, so—it better shows the hilt.
Young S. A pretty hilt! I bought it for the hilt.
The cutler would have palm'd upon me one
Of better blade! He thought he had a fool
To deal with! Buy a rapier for the blade!
Who shows the blade?

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Ralph. Most true.
Young S. I think I'll do.
Ralph. No doubt on't—Here she comes, sir.—That's her voice.
Didst ever hear her sing, sir? [KATE *sings without.*
Young S. Never.
Ralph. No!
Then never did you hear a nightingale.
Apart awhile, sir—you shall hear her voice.

Enter KATE, *and sings.*

What shall I give to win your heart,
My pretty chambermaid?
What shall I give to win your heart?
I've land, I've gold, with aught I'll part
To make you mine, he said.

The maid, kind sir, whose heart is sold,
A well-a-day may sing!
The maid, kind sir, whose heart is sold,
Sells more than worth of land or gold,
Unless a golden ring!

Say aught but that, my bonny queen,
And thou'rt my own, he said.
Say aught but that, my bonny queen—
Who gives not that, she said, is e'en
Beneath a chambermaid!

Take that, take that, and all beside,
Be mine, be mine, he said!
Take that, take that, and all beside;
She's worth me, that must be my bride,
Though but a chambermaid!

Ralph. Up to her, sir—yet hold! I'll whisper her
A word shall profit thee; your gentle blood
Is skittish, sir, and mettlesome—behoves
You tenderly lay hand upon it, sir;
'Tis quick of instinct too, to know its kind.
Was ever balance poised by thee or thine,
Yard flourish'd, counter brush'd, or leger scrawl'd,

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'Tis odds she'll apprehend it in a trice.
Thank heaven, thou art indeed a gentleman.
Young S. [*Aside.*] I'd thank it, never had I pass'd for one.
A score of crowns for my own clothes again!
'Sdeath, should she find I wear another man's—
The thought doth set my heart a thumping. On
My forehead do I feel the moisture break—
My knees begin to knock—oh, Thomas Small!
Better thou hadst remain'd thy father's dog
Than ta'en a roam to Romford.
Ralph. Kate, behoves
Thou bear thyself as lofty gentlewoman.
If he looks ten feet high, do thou look twenty;
When he accosts thee, eye him up and down,
And down and up again, from head to foot;
He verily believes thou art a lady,
Keep him to that—thy arms a-kimbo put—
Walk to and fro, and toss thy pretty head!
Behoves fine ladies give themselves fine airs,
Or who would know them fine— [*To* YOUNG SMALL.
Up to her now.
Young S. Fair Kate, a word or two. I'd speak to thee.
Kate. [*Following* RALPH'S *direction.*] Sir! [YOUNG SMALL *starts back*, KATE *walks about as instructed.*
Ralph. 'Sdeath! stick up to her, or, as I live,
You'll lose her, sir. Set thou to work as well,
Pace to and fro, a yard at every step—
Great men, I have remark'd, take mighty strides—
That's right! she stops—now to the charge again;
Tell her thou hast a guess of her estate;
'Twill soften her—but mind thou nothing bate
The feeling of thine own, as right thou shouldst not;
That art indeed a very gentleman.
Young S. A cunning man who feels the thing that is not!
Marry, I have found a secret out. 'Tis not
The clothes that make a man a gentleman.
Odzooks! she traversed me from top to toe,

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As she would lay me open with her eye.
I vow I feel as I were like to swoon—
O Little Cheap—snug Little Cheap! as much
As once I wish'd me out of thee, I now
Do wish me back again!
Ralph. Now, pretty Kate,
We'll draw to calm—thou hast convinced him quite.
He swears thou art a gentlewoman born.
Put off a cloud or two, and now and then,
When next he speaks, give out a blink of sun,
But not that he forget 'twas tempest, Kate.
Take out thy kerchief—hast thou one; now draw it
From corner unto corner; be it clean?
Now pass it cross thy face, and back again;
Now use it as do ladies use a fan,
'Twill show a gentle agitation, Kate;
Swing on one foot thy body to and fro,
And with thy other beat upon the ground.
Now, sir, at once propose for her—'sdeath, sir!
Have not a faint heart!
Young S. No!
Ralph. Remember you're
A gentleman.
Young S. I do!
Ralph. And so you are
From top to toe.
Young S. I thank you, Ralph—you're good.
Ralph. And so your father was before you, sir.
And quite as much his father before him;
Was he not, sir?
Young S. Ay, quite as much, good Ralph,
Or, if he was not, we're no gentlemen.
Ralph. Then, now at once propose for her. Hem! twice
Or thrice before you speak, and broadly hint
At her gentility.
Young S. Engaging Kate—
As gentleman should gentlewoman wed,
So fain would I to wife take thee, my Kate!
And now I must take breath; I tell thee, Ralph,
To woo a lady, is no easy thing. [*Retires.*

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Ralph. Kate, canst thou blush? If not, why hang thy head,
And look as though thou knew'st not where to look,
And clasp thy hands and twirl thy thumbs about,
And make a shift to squeeze out half a sigh,
But loud enough to hear. Well done! well done!
Bespeaks her everything a gentlewoman—
Does it not, sir? [*To* YOUNG SMALL.

Young S. Upon my life it does.

Ralph. Now bring her to the point of yes or no.

Young S. Of yes or no?

Ralph. Yes!

Young S. Yes or no! I vow
I tremble at the thought on't—just I feel
As I did play at loggats, and a pound
Were laid upon the game, and mine the throw.

Ralph. Well, sir?

Young S. Good Ralph—I'll take a little time.

Ralph. So do. He comes to pop the question, Kate.
When first he speaks, no answer render him:
Nor yet the second time—nor yet the third.

Kate. No, Ralph?

Ralph. Be quiet, Kate; it were not meet,
In such a strait, that gentlewomen speak,
The thought should seem to take away thy breath;
Thou shouldst appear as thou wast like to faint,
And faint, sweet Kate!—I'll be beside thee—fall
Upon my shoulder—and when I say "now,"
Come to thyself—but mind, not all at once,
But bit by bit—I'll have him at thy feet.
Look at him once, and turn away again—
Another time—and try to turn away,
But, finding that thou canst not do't, cry "yes!"
And, overcome, fall plump into his arms!
You'll mind?

Kate. Be sure of me.

Ralph. Make sure of him!
Up to her now, sir,—now or never, sir!

Young S. Dear Kate! wilt be my bride?

Ralph. Again, sweet sir! [time?

Young S. Dear Kate! wilt be my bride, a second

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The third time. [KATE *falls on* RALPH'S *shoulder.*
Wilt thou be my bride, sweet Kate ?
Ralph. I do believe she faints.
Young S. She does indeed !
She's a true lady—on my life she is.
Ralph. Down on your knees, sir—both your knees—
and chafe
Her hands with yours—kissing them now and then—
And 'gainst she comes unto herself, 'twere well
If you could squeeze a tear into your eye :—
Now Kate, awake ! Your lover's at your feet
Kneeling as doth behove a gentleman—now—
Kate. [*Recovers—follows* RALPH'S *directions.*] Yes !
[*Throwing herself into* SMALL'S *arms, nearly over-setting him.*
Ralph. Hold up, sweet sir, and try to bear
Thy overpowering happiness—to both
I wish a world of joy.—Take her apart
Into the garden ; never drop thy suit
Until she name the day, and be't to-morrow.
" The cup, sir, and the lip ! " But, gentle Kate,
'Tis not enough the bird is limed, behoves
You have him in your hand—good sir !—fair lady !
I give you joy, and wish you a good day. [*Goes out.*
Young S. Come, gentle Kate, that is to be my bride.
Kate. O, la, sir !
Young S. Sir ! call me thy Thomas, Kate.
My name is Thomas—master Thomas.
Kate. La !
I ne'er can call thee Thomas.
Young S. Yes, thou canst
And wilt—dear Thomas !—thy own Thomas !
Kate. La !
Young S. As I will call thee my own Kate, be sure,
As soon as we are man and wife.
Kate. O, la !
Don't talk of it.
Young S. Of what else should I talk ?
Come Kate—my wife !—my lady Kate !
Kate. O, la ! [*They go out.*

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SCENE III.—*The Bar and Parlour.*

Enter the Hostess, *conducting* Last, Mortice, *and* Mallet.

Hostess. Walk in, good master Mallet; gentlemen,
Walk in, you're welcome. What will't please you have?
We've choice for all, and nought but's of the best.
Mallet. We'll taste your ale, good mistress Trusty. Hark!
How does your pretty barmaid? Did you speak,
As you did promise, a good word for me?
Hostess. I did.
Mallet. And was she pleased?
Hostess. 'Tis hard to say
When maids are pleased. When I myself was one,
What most I seem'd was oft what least I felt.
Mortice. Your ear, kind hostess.—Gave you mistress Bess
The message I did send her?
Hostess. Word for word.
Mortice. What word did she return thee?
Hostess. Marry, none!
Bess is a prudent wench. Maids' thoughts go cheap
That can be had for asking! Little worth,
Yet hoarded charily, great price they bring.
I found it so myself when I was young.
Last. A word, good mistress Trusty, when you're done.
Hostess. I'm at your service now, sir.
Last. Handed you
My gift to Bess?
Hostess. I did.
Last. And took she it?
Hostess. She took it not.—'Tis here for you again.
Presents to maids are earnest. Take they them,
They next should take the donors. Had not I
Thought so in my free days, I should have won
A dower in gifts! You shall be served anon.
Mortice. I guess you've come back speed.
Last. Hast thou come better?

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Mallet. The fault's our own. Love's not a game at law
Wherein the player is not he that stakes.
I'll play my game myself, and ask sweet Bess
To church to-morrow!
Last. So will I.
Mortice. And I. [*They go out.*
[BESS *crosses the stage after them with a tankard.*

Enter Hostess, *conducting* BELMONT *and* WILFORD.

Hostess. Walk in, walk in—I'll show you to a room.
Wilf. And please you get my chamber ready straight;
I will at once to bed.
Hostess. I'll see to't, sir.
He early goes to rest—he must be ill.
Love-sick perhaps? There's comfort for him then,
Like all his sex he'll soon get over that.
Bel. Hostess!
Hostess. Your will?
Bel. I'd try your wine—is't good?
Hostess. The very best!
Please you sit down, good sirs.
[*Places chairs and goes out.*
Bel. Still rapt as ever!
Rouse thee, Wilford, rouse thee!
Shake off this lethargy, and be a man!
Take faster hold of hope! we'll find her yet.
But should we fail, what then? Art thou to pine
To death? This malady is of the head
More than the heart. Believe it can be cured
Thou'lt find 'twill be so. Be thyself again!
Be free! But once beheld may be forgot.
Wilf. Yes, if a thing that any fellow hath.
I may forget a diamond, can I find
Another one as rich: but show me one
That is the paragon of all the mine,
And try if that's forgot, though seen but once!
Say that but once I see a beauteous star,
I may forget it for another star:
But say but once I do behold the sun,
And name the orb will blot its image out!

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Bel. But of a single draught of love to die!
Wilf. Why not? There is your poison, strong and weak;
One kind admits of antidote—one not.
One by the drachm, one by the scruple, kills:
Another by the grain—for not in bulk,
But subtleness, the lethal virtue lies.
So are there kinds in love! a dozen shafts
May gall him, and the bounding deer run on,—
But one shot home, behold he's down at once!

BESS *enters with wine, which she places on a table, at some distance from* BELMONT *and* WILFORD; *the former sees her at once, and regards her with an expression of fixed admiration—the latter remaining in a state of perfect abstraction.*

Bel. E'er saw'st thou thing so fair?
Wilf. What speak'st thou of?
Bel. Yon maid that waits on us.
Wilf. I've seen! I've seen!
Bel. This is to dream!
He sleeps—I'll wake him then. My pretty maid,
Hand thou the cup to yonder gentleman.
[BESS, *whose eyes have just fallen on* WILFORD, *stands gazing upon him, apparently insensible to everything else.*
What ails the girl? does she not hear? She's fix'd
As statue to the pedestal—what is't
She gazes at? As I do live, 'tis he!
Commend me to a sallow cheek! She's smit,
If Cupid is a marksman! Maids, I've heard,
Like books they weep over! the which, the more
They're made to melt, the more do they devour!
See how she reads him! Marry, she will get
The book by heart!
Bess. 'Tis he! 'tis he! How's this?
I feel at home while I do look on him.
Seem near me hearts I know. I could believe
The roof our own. I scarce would start—were now
The door to ope—to see my mother's face!
Yet what is he to me? Acquaintance of
My eyes, whom ne'er they met but once before!

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Bel. A shot! a shot! Cupid is in the vein!
Bess. [*drawing her father's picture from her bosom.*]
How like! how like! how very—very like!
There only wants a smile upon the lip—
I think the lip more sweet the smile away—
Fie! 'tis my father's lip! My father then,
As often I have heard my mother say,
Just new had won my mother's love—I ween
My mother then smiled too! Who ought to smile,
If not the maid that's woo'd by him she'd wed?
Her Bess will never wed!
Bel. A sigh! Be sure
The fawn is struck.
Bess. Just now I felt at home,
And now I feel a thousand miles from home!
Things, strange before, are now still stranger grown,
And he most strange of all—the farthest off,
The least expected ever to be near—
The sight of whom brought home so near to Bess!
What's Bess's home to him? He'd pass the door,
And would not know she dwelt there! If he did,
Would never thank the latch to let him in!
He has a home and friends that love him there—
Friends that he loves. Poor Bess is far from home,
Was never farther—never half so far.
Hostess [*without*]. Why, Bess! what, Bess!
Bel. How deep she is entranced.

Hostess *enters, and goes to her.*

Hostess. Why Bess, what ails thee, child?
Bess. [*abstractedly.*] Anon! anon!
I'll do it this moment.
Hostess. Do it! what wilt do?
Bess. [*confused and hurriedly.*] Whate'er you bid.
Hostess. Why, what has happen'd to her!
Look to the bar till I come back again.
Why Bess, dost hear me, that thou dost not move?
Bess. [*confused.*] I'll go this moment—where am I to go?
Hostess. The girl's bewilder'd! "Where am I to
Canst tell me what I said to thee just now? [go!"

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Bess. Thou saidst, I think—or I mistake—thou saidst—
Thou saidst—perhaps I did not rightly hear;
Thinking of one thing, one forgets at times
Another thing—thou saidst—it was not that—
Nor that; in sooth, I know not what thou saidst.
Hostess. I knew't. I bade thee go and mind the bar.
Bess. I'll do't.
[*Still looking in the direction of* WILFORD.
Hostess. Thou'lt do't! and go'st thou not to do it?
Yonder's the bar—why, Bess, thou art asleep!
Thou dreamest! Rouse thee, Bess. Go, mind the bar.
The girl's not like herself.
[BESS *and* Hostess *go out severally.*
Bel. A point-blank shot!
An entry this in Cupid's register!
Lord Wilford, was't not noon with you just now?
Wilf. Noon!
Bel. Felt you not the sun?
Wilf. The sun! what sun?
Bel. I'faith a glorious one, but not so kind
As that which shines by day; for not a beam
It threw on aught beside. You were its earth—
The grateful earth unlike—the orb alone
For which its light seem'd made; absorbing it,
Without so much as e'en a smile, to show
You knew't from very darkness!
Wilf. You are merry;
And I can only wonder that you are,—
As sickness doth, that health can feed, while she
Herself from rarest viands loathing turns.
It is not fancy; or, if fancy 'tis,
'Tis such as breeds reality—as, from
Imagination only of disease,
Disease itself will grow. Do I but dream?
Say that the anguish of a probed wound
Is but a dream—say he that writhes in fire
Is fancy haunted—just as much am I!
See'st not my fever? Is't not in mine eye?
My cheek? if not, my pulse will show it thee!

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For if its throb be not the counter one
To that which health doth know, 'tis anything
But index of my heart.

Hostess *enters*.

Host. Ho! Bess, I say!

Enter BESS, *who is immediately perceived by* WILFORD, *and meeting his eye, stands as transfixed.*

Why, Bess, how's this? Is't true thou wast o'erheard
To one, to two, and three, to give consent,
When ask'd to be a wife? Art thou not pledged
To marry Ralph?
Wilf. Is she to be a bride!
Bel. Are you awake?
Wilf. I am! I am!—as one,
That long at sea doth pine him sick for land,
And, ever dreaming on't, starts up at last,
With the rebound which says his bark has struck,
And drowns in sight and very reach of it!
Bel. Is that the maid?
Wilf. It is. Now wonder at me!
Wouldst thou not ask, sprang ever that from earth?
Look there, and think of an anatomy!
Can lurk the canker death in such a cheek?
Is not that flower imperishable, as
It lodged the virtue of the feigned one,
Which never dies—in poet's song 'yclept
The immortal amaranth! Is she to be
A bride? I'll speak to her!
Bel. Thou'rt mad!
Wilf. And if I am,
Then once at least is madness rational.
Being what I am, not to be mad as I,
Were to be kindred to the cloddish brute,
That looks at her and knows not what it sees!—
Prevent me not! Art pledged to any one?
Art thou to be a bride? Say yes or no.
Hostess. Speak, Bess! say yes! Thou know'st thou'rt pledged
To Ralph?

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Enter RALPH.

Maids, sir, you know, are coy—give me thy hand.
There—art thou now content?

[*Places her hand in* RALPH'S *without her being conscious of it.*

Wilf. Content!—Enough!
O'ermeasure on't! I've done,—yet would I touch
The precious thing, so much I've coveted,
Was ne'er till now in reach of—now so near—
Do find can ne'er be mine!—Whoe'er thou art,
Thou art acquaintance of my heart—as soon
As seen, beloved! I saw thee only once,
That once too oft!—For then I thought upon
My marriage bell, and wish'd it might be thine,
But now, when thine they ring, they ring my knell!
'Tis not a crime to kiss thy hand, while yet
The banning of the priest forbids me not.
There! Let thy bridegroom at the altar set,
In presence of the watching cherubim,
A truer seal upon thy lip than that
I've fixed upon thy hand—though his shall last
Till doomsday! Take me hence! 'Tis hard to look
At what we wish were ours, and, while we do't,
Persuade ourselves it can't be.—Take me hence!
The only sight of her is hold too strong
For me to struggle 'gainst! It pulls me towards her!
I feel as it did suck my vision in!
My breath! my life!—I cannot quit her!

[*Breaks from* BELMONT *and rushes towards her.* RALPH *interposes.* WILFORD *seems to have lost all power over himself.* BELMONT *approaches him to lead him out; but, when at the wing, he turns—gazes distractedly upon* BESS.

Lost!

[*Rushes out, followed by* BELMONT, *and at the same moment* BESS *sinks senseless on the shoulder of* RALPH.

END OF ACT II.

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ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Front of the Queen's Arms.*

Enter PETER *from the Inn, singing.*

A white gown and girdle,
A knot of the same;
And come to our wedding,
Both damsel and dame!

Peter. A charming day! A most pleasant day! and pleasant and charming work too—work fit for such a day! Right excellent work! Wedding and feasting! The feasting for me; the wedding for them that like it. For mine own part, holding the sex to be a provocative to wrath, which is sin, I'd sooner hang than wed! But for the feasting—there I'm your man! Roast, boiled, or fried, was never the dish that couldn't warrant me the smoothest-temper'd fellow in Christendom—with the special provision that there was enough on't. I wouldn't say as much of a cup, for a cup is a thing that a man of very oil and sugar will sometimes quarrel over; but, from ale to sack, I defy any man living to say he ever saw me quarrel *with* my cup—barring the liquor was bad, or the cup empty. If I'm not the man for a feast, then never man sat down to one. I could feast it you seven days out of the week, and let him that can, do more. Nay, were there eight days in the week, and the week nothing the longer, I could feast it to the eighth day too. So the good cheer sha'n't lag for me. [*Sings.*

Your bran new jerkins, gallants, don,
Or jerkins new, as you may;
But the gallant whose mood is not o' the best,
Were best to stay away.

I'll give them a song. Marry, that can I, when I am tuned to the pitch. I'm none of your sober singers—your trollers of long-winded ballads with a burden

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to them. I hate your burdens! To be outsung by every knave that has three notes upon his voice. I like to sing alone; but then it must be when the liquor has tuned me to the pitch. Your liquor's a marvellous fine master of singing. When I'm tuned to the pitch, I'd like you to show me the man that can sing better, or the song that's too many for me. Nay, though I know not the air, I'll put one to it. I'll sing them a song—none of your ditties, such as my old master used to grumble.

In love fair Celia fell, O,
With alas! and O! and a well-a-day!
And her love the maid would tell, O,—
Love comes and goes like sun in May!

Above your reach ten feet, O,
With alas! and O! and a well-a-day!
Appears ten times as sweet, O,—
Love comes and goes like sun in May!

The youth he loved the maid, O,
With alas! and O! and a well-a-day!
But to woo her was afraid, O,—
Love comes and goes like sun in May!

But when her love she told, O,
With alas! and O! and a well-a-day!
His love grew wondrous cold, O,—
Love comes and goes like sun in May!

My moral would you find, O,
With alas! and O! and a well-a-day!
No maid should tell her mind, O,—
Love comes and goes like sun in May!

Enter OLD SMALL *as off a Journey.*

Old S. I thank thee, fortune! Kind art thou to me! He's here! he's here! Why, who should sing that strain If not the varlet knave he took with him? That can't be he!

Peter. [*Aside.*] My master's father here!

Old S. Good sir,—

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Peter. [*Aside.*] All's right. He knows me not.

Old S. I pray,
Heard you a strain just now?

Peter. I know not what you call a strain. I heard a varlet trying to play a tune upon his nose, which I could have pulled for him, 'twas so villanously ill done. If you call that a strain, let never man sing a strain to me! I know when I hear a strain. In a strain there is measure of time, which is the main part of it; measure of tune, which is no indifferent part of it; and measure of voice, which, though it rank not with either of the former, is yet allowed to be a part: but here was neither measure of time, tune, nor voice, but measure enough of the lack of them. If playing a tune upon the nose be a strain, why then I heard a strain just now; but whip me if I'd stand to hear such strain again.

Old S. This could never be he.

Peter. [*Aside.*] He eyes me hard.

Old S. One question more, good sir. What kind of man was he you heard sing?

Peter. What! your nose-tuner? Why, a tolerable sufficient man—nay, a very sufficient man; say he had the dress of one.

Old S. How was he dressed, I pray you?

Peter. Marry, with cap, jerkin, hose, and shoes; but the cap was out at the crown, the jerkin was out at the elbows, the hose were out all over; and as for the shoes, it would tax a conjuror to find out why he wore them, for the uppers were the most that remained of them, and they were out at the toes. Shirt had he none, or he showed it not; doublet had he ever, his jerkin must have eaten it up; for it was a most incontinent one—a devourer of all kinds of cloth—coarse, middle, fine, and superfine! and of all colours, a superlative sample of patch-work, a very nosegay of a jerkin, saving the odour on't. If he was a gentleman, he was a gentleman in jest; if he was a beggar, he was a beggar in earnest. Service he could never have had; for bowels of flesh and blood could not have committed it, to put a human body into such rat's livery.

Old S. My scarecrow Peter, to a certainty.

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Enter YOUNG SMALL *from the Inn.*

Peter. My master! In, sir! in!

Young S. Why, what's the matter?

Old S. [*to* PETER.] Worthy sir,—

Peter. Anon—

Young S. My father!

Peter. Fear not,—knows he not 'tis I.

Young S. Nay, if he finds us out, my fortune's marr'd.

Peter. Stay! and I'll rid you of him in a trice.

Old S. Pray you, what gentleman is that?

Peter. Gentleman! Ne'er saw you a lord before?

Old S. Is he a lord?

Peter. Is he a lord!—Look at him! Is he not a lord? Not your lord mayor, forsooth—a lord to-day, a master to-morrow; but an every-day lord—a lord, and no thanks to you; nay, an' he halt at the third hob-nail, yet shall he be a lord. Avoid him, or carry your cap in your hand. He takes measure of state upon him. If you take the wall of him, you may chance to take from the wall to the stocks. It happened no later than yesterday; though, truth to say, the youth was a forward one—one of your care-for-noughts from the city—a fellow that would hector it like a prince, though, six days out of the seven, I warrant you, his father wipes his beard with an apron.

Old S. What! put he him in the stocks?

Peter. Ay did he; and from the stocks into prison, whence if he be not transferred to the gallows, he has more luck than grace.

Old S. How angered he the lord, I pray you?

Peter. Marry, as I said, he took the wall of him; whereat the lord commended the wall to his head; which he not relishing, commended his hand to the lord's cheek; who thereupon commended his body to the stocks, and thence to the prison; whence, when he is delivered, 'twill be upon a release in full, signed by the sheriff, and executed by the hangman—for he is a great lord.

Old S. Alack! so it should seem, sir!—Know you, sir, the name of the youth?

Peter. I heard it, but have forgotten it, and yet have

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I a memory; but 'twas a very patch of a name. One good substantial name would make three such. 'Twas something like Sprat—or—

Old S. 'Twasn't Small?

Peter. Small was the name!

Old S. Alack, sir, 'tis my son!

Peter. Thy son!—Avoid!—Avoid! Safety for thee lies hence—here, danger! Shares he thy blood, and shalt thou not share his punishment? Would he have transgressed but for thee, who but for thee had never lived to transgress? Shall he on whom treason is fathered hang, and the father of the traitor go free? Avoid, I say! Begone! Fine awaits thee! Imprisonment awaits thee! A halter awaits thee!

Old S. Might I but have speech
Of that fair lord? Good sir, hast thou his ear?
Look, here are twenty pieces,—speak for me,
And call them thine!

Peter. 'Twould nought avail!

Old S. Good sir,
I'll make the twenty thirty! Take them, sir!
Good thirty pieces only for a word!
Come, then, I'll make the thirty forty! What!
Won't that suffice? What will, then? Sir, you see
A poor old man that has an only son,
Whom he, in evil hour, let go from him,
Thinking that he could live without him, till
The task he tried, but found too hard a one!
Then choice had none except to follow him,
Or stay at home and die! And here is come
To Rumford all the way from London, sir,—
On foot, sir!—Take the forty pieces, sir!—
Nay, then, take fifty!—sixty!—all I have!
And only speak a good word for my son.

Young S. Peter, thou'st spoil'd it all! Ne'er heed! ne'er heed!
Thy son is not to hang.

[*Speaking with his back towards* OLD SMALL.

Old S. O thanks for that!
But he's in prison. Ope the door for him,
Although to close't on me! I'll take his place:

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Perhaps of right I should. I held the lash
And rein—if he's refractory or rash,
Why is he so, but that I used them not?
He better were, had he been better train'd—
That he's not so, his training bear the blame.
That lies with me. Yet was my fault my love—
My too fond love!—so fond it could not see
How duty could be harsh and yet be kind.

Young S. Father!

Old S. How!—What!—My son! Ah, Thomas, Thomas,
To pass thee on thy father for a lord!
And who is this? Thou varlet—knave—rank knave!
[*To* PETER.

Young S. Nay, father, well 'twas meant; thou comest here
To see great things.

Old S. Is this a sample of them?
What kind of jerkin's that for thee to wear?
'Twould suit a lord! And trunks to match withal,
And doublet! Board and lodging for a life
Thou carry'st on thy back! A cap and plume!
Why, for what cobwebs, Thomas, hast thou changed
Thy father's heavy crowns! What's that I see?
Wear'st thou a rapier too! The end of time
Is come! And thou, thou ape—for nothing good
But tricks! Thou mischief! Evil ne'er at rest!
For whom the hide were clothing good enough!
Are these my savings that do shine on thee?
The which to keep, thy master's back more oft
Did lack than go provided! Cap and plume
For thee!—A halter for thee!—Sirrah! I'll to town
Again. No hope! No help! Discomfort all!
Care lost! Love wasted! Thomas, fare-thee-well!
I shake thy hand in bitterness, I do!
I'll strive to live without thee!—To what use?
I tried, and couldn't do't. [*Falls on his neck.*

Young S. Take not on so!
Or I'll take on. In sooth I will! I'm not
A stone—a lump of flint—a piece of steel.
Let our apparel pass—or note it but

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For joy! for very joy! Thou hast a son
That's born to fortune!—to high fortune! Know,
To-day's my wedding day!
Old S. Thy wedding day!
Young S. My wedding day.
Old S. And who's to be thy bride?
Young S. A lady.
Old S. How! Why, wherewithal hast thou
To keep a lady?
Young S. Keep a lady! No;
Sufficient 'tis, methinks, I marry her.
My lady shall keep me. How say you now?
My lady's blood! She's one that comes of kin—
That looks for lands and coffers—that is heir
To titles! Wonder not though thou shouldst have
A baron to thy grandson! Close accounts,
And shut up shop!
Old S. I'm all amaze! I'd like
To see thy bride.
Young S. Thou shalt, but not to speak—
For, though thy son for gentle state was born,
Who looks on thee, saw he a counter e'er,
Bethinks him of a shop; so might'st thou mar
My fortune.
Old S. Knows she not thy father's calling?
Thomas! nought prospers like plain-dealing, son!
But make thy fortune thy own way—thou ne'er
Wouldst follow mine!
Young S. Content thee, father, that
My fortune's made! E'en follow us to church;
But not a word until the knot be tied,
And I be fast and sure a gentleman!
Hoa, Kate! Sweet Kate! E'er saw you lady, father?
You now shall look on one! The form of lady,
The air of lady—face of lady—yea
The eyes, nose, mouth, and cheeks of lady. Kate!
Come forth, my bride!
Kate [*coming to the door.*] Who calls?
Young S. Your bridegroom, Kate.
To church! to church!
Kate. Before my bridemaid comes!

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Young S. Thy bridemaid, Kate, is not to marry thee,
But I, and I am here; so loiter not.
The sexton's part is done—the doors are oped;
The clerk is ready with his horn and pen;
The parson's gown'd, and standing by the book;
The merry bells are on the watch to ring—
There want but thee and me; so come to church!
Kate. Without a bridemaid, I should be ashamed!
Young S. How delicate! Your bridemaid yonder comes;
So come, my Lady Kate!
Kate. Heigho!
Young S. How sweet!
Lean on me, Kate.
Kate. I fear to take thy arm.
Young S. How elegant! Nay, Kate—
Kate. But if I must—
Young S. How like a lady doth she carry her
In all things! Bear up, Kate! Take courage, Kate!
Come on! Now warrant me a gentleman!

[*They go out.*

Music without.—Enter WILFORD *and* BELMONT.

Wilf. Love plies the rack on which itself doth lie!
Tell it of solace, and 'twill talk of pain,
Which to augment its piteous profit 'tis!
So far unlike, love's merchant is to him
That trades for pelf. He hears his venture's sunk
And cries, "'Tis gone!"—tries to forget his loss—
Hoists up fresh hope, and launches other freight.
No other freight for him that trades in love!
His venture haply founder'd—no new hope!—
His dreamy day of speculation's done!
His breast hath room for nothing, but the thought
How many fathom deep his hope doth lie!
He has no use for life, except to make
Its cheek a feast for comfortless despair;
Nor ever smiles again, except to see
How fast it wastes away!
Bel. The lover's tune!
Wilf. They come to carry her to church! To own

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The happy hand she'll take to lead her there,
Would I forego the clasp of Fortune's own,
And all her gifts of rank and wealth refund!

Bel. Yet gave she these in kindness. By their means
Your love might prosper yet. What need you do,
But doff this sordid guise, appear yourself,
And ask and have her?

Wilf. No! not even her
For their deserts!—Myself! What's of myself
That is not here? Call I the prouder suit
I should put on—myself? Call I my name,
No merit ever won of mine—myself?
They're nought of me but what a knave might wear
As well as I! My ardent soul's myself!—
My heart, too proud to be in fortune's debt,
Where merit sole should win—myself! My mind
That its chief store by nature's riches sets
With this its vassal case, such as it is—
Myself!—The only self I'd use or thank
To win my love or friend! So end my part
What it began! I'll look once more upon her!

[*Retires with* BELMONT.

Enter RALPH *and* Hostess, *meeting.*

Hostess. Ralph, where's thy bride?

Ralph. She's in her chamber still.

Hostess. Then bring her forth.

Ralph. She does refuse to come.

Hostess. For what
Delays she thus? Her bonnet's trimm'd—her coif
She has—I sent her in her wedding-gown
An hour ago, I'm certain 'twas a fit!
I'll fetch her forth myself. [*Enters the house.*

Enter YOUNG SMALL *and* KATE, *followed by* OLD SMALL *and* PETER.

Young S. Joy! Give me joy!

Ralph. How, sir, so soon abroad! The knotting done!

Young S. E'en so, good master Ralph! Father, my bride—

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Kate. Thy father!
Young S. Even so, my pretty Kate!
But fit that all do know thou art my wife.
Good friends, my lady—Mistress Thomas Small.
Now do me justice 'fore my father, Kate;
He thinks me fool—prove thou that I am wise.
Thy kin, my Kate—thy kin, my lady Kate?
Kate. Anan?
Young S. Anan! Thy kin?
Kate. Anan?
Young S. Thy kin?
Thy house? thy family? thy pedigree!
Kate. Anan?
Young S. Anan again!
Whence drawest thou thy noble blood, my Kate?
How comest it to thee? Is it by the male
Or female side? The lands thou'rt heiress to—
The titles that shall fall to thee?—In right
Of whom expectest them?

Enter STRAP, *half tipsy.*

Strap. Fine doings here!
A wedding! So!—I'll thank you for a knot
For honest master Strap.
Young S. Peace, fellow!—Peace!
The knotting's o'er.
Strap. O then the bride's a wife!
No doubt, good sirs, you've all had kisses round;
So now my turn is come. Sir, by your leave.
Young S. Out, knave! Thou art full of ale.
Strap. A lucky day
For thee, when thou art full of aught so good!
I say I'll have a kiss.
Young S. What art thou?
Strap. What?
A cobbler.
Young S. What!—A fellow kiss my wife,
That is not master even of a craft!
Strap. That shows thy wisdom! cobbling is the chief
Of crafts.

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Young S. The chief!—you hear him, masters! chief
Of crafts—I question if the half of one!—
Yea, third of one!—A cordiner's a craft;
What he doth make the cobbler only mends,
And so's no better than a patch, a botch,
A nail, a tack, a stitch—a cobbler!—what!
A cobbler kiss my wife!—an awl—a piece
Of wax and packthread—and the bristle of
A hog—and there's a cobbler! Hark thee, Kate?
Could'st bear of such a lout to take a kiss?
No! never gentlewoman could!

Strap. Young man,
Thou'rt drunk, or mad—or both—thou knowest not
What cobbling is! 'Tis part of every trade,
And the chief part,—no trade but hath its cobbler.
Your law hath cobblers, your divinity,
Your surgery, your physic. There are cobblers
In merchandise and war. Who does not know
What cobblers are there 'mongst your politicians?
If that should be a craft which is most followed,
Then cobbling is a craft—the chief of crafts.

Young S. Well hast thou argued it! Yet provest thou not
Thy right to kiss my bride!

Strap. Of new made bride
'Tis right of any one to take a kiss;
So prithee stand aside.—Nay, wilt thou not,
Thou'lt learn, belongs he to a trade or not,
A cobbler is a man! But no—no broil
Upon a wedding-day. That were not like
A cobbler! Come—a bargain, sir—I'll leave it
To your lady.

Young S. Gives she leave, you're welcome, sir—
Small likelihood of that!

Strap. Fair lady!—what!
Slut! hussy! vixen! wanton! cockatrice!

Young S. How, knave?

Strap. Knave! she's the knave! Prevent me not.
I'll call her what I list, sir—what I list
I'll do to her. [*Embraces her.*] Make rosin of her!—pack-thread!

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Nail her into a last, you bridegroom!—Take
Strap, hammer, pincers to her!—turn her
Into thongs and shoe-strings!—Wherefore should I not,
That am her father!
Young S. What?
Strap. O run-away!
Oh, vixen! mad-cap! Oh my daughter, Kate,
And have I found thee?
Kate. Father, I'm married—
Married unto a gentleman!
Strap. [*seeing* OLD SMALL.] Odzooks!
Good master Small!—factor of minikins
And corking-pins—of pins of all degrees!—
Hearing that thou hadst traced thy thriftless child
To Rumford here, and having lost my own,
Good fortune put it in my crazy pate
To follow thee,—and lo! what speed I've come!
My daughter's found—and doubly found!—She says
She's married to a gentleman!—Hast found
Thy son?
Old S. Yes, Master Strap, he's there.
Strap. This he!
So, sirrah! jackanapes! And have I craved
Thy leave to kiss thy bride? Scorn'st thou me now?
And if thou dost, thou art my son-in-law—
Yea, thou art married to a cobbler's daughter.
And what of that? If not a gentleman,
A cobbler is the king of jolly fellows!
Ralph. Kate! shall I now doff cap unto thy spouse?
Kate. Yes; if thou dost what fitteth thee to do.
Ralph. Thy gentleman hath dwindled to a pin!
Kate. A pin that's worth a bush of thorns, like thee!
Ralph. Give you much joy, good sir; you've wed
your match;
Who doubts it, let him!—I will swear thy bride
A lady—much as thou'rt a gentleman!
Nay, frown not—— [*Good-humouredly.*
Young S. Frown! who ever saw me frown?
I have lost all day at loggats, and I'd thank
The man could say, he ever saw me frown!
Come, Kate!—come fathers both.

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Kate. Wilt take me, sir?
Young S. Take thee! have I not taken thee? I will—
And keep thee too, so thou wilt let me, Kate.
[YOUNG SMALL, KATE, OLD SMALL, STRAP, *and* PETER *retire.*

Enter Hostess *from house.*

Hostess. I vow the girl's bewilder'd! yes and no,
And no and yes, are all you get from her!
Nor yet will she come forth.—Is that her step?
It is. She comes.

Enter BESS, *dressed as the Beggar's Daughter.*

Why, Bess, are you not dress'd?
In trim like that went ever bride to church?
Ralph. Trim good enough for me. Come then, my bride;
Come, pretty Bess! your hand to go to church!
Bess. I go not, sir, a bride, to church with you.
Wilf. [*Aside.*] Hope, hearty friend! art thou come back to me?
I feel thee, yet can scarce believe I do,
So sure I thought we had for ever parted.
Welcome, O welcome!
Hostess. Gavest thou not consent
To marry Ralph?
Bess. Consent I could not give,
My heart was never author of the deed,
My tongue did act without its privacy,—
The hand you covet, others' wishes claim
Disposal of—I have parents.
Ralph. Where are they?
Bess. Alas! I know not; but I go to seek them.
Ralph. Who are thy parents then, my pretty Bess,
Tell me, sweet Bess!
Hostess. Sweet Bess, thy father's name?
Ralph. What is thy father?
Bess. The Blind Beggar, sir,
Of Bethnal Green.
Young S. You see I might have wed

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A beggar, father. Give me praise for that.
My Kate, a kiss! Come to our wedding cheer!
[YOUNG SMALL, KATE, OLD SMALL, STRAP, *and* PETER *go out.*
Ralph. Sweet Bess, hadst thou for father, craftsman low
As low can be, I should be well content
To call him father, too; a beggar, though,
Is father none for me! [RALPH *goes out.*
Hostess. Hold up thy head,
My pretty Bess! Thou'rt bride too good for them!
Above their mark! Shame on them! shame! I would
I knew the man were worth thee, Bess.
Wilf. What kind
Of man were he?
Hostess. Why, likely, such as thou,
For looks!—Though I've seen better.—Met we not
Before?—'Amercy!—Yesternight we did,
When thou didst rave of knells, and wedding bells,
For love of Bess! Art now in raving mood?
Or have thy wits, last night, a roaming went,
Return'd with this fair morning? Come, confess,
Thou'rt brother to my son!
Wilf. Of none, good dame,
Who slight that maid!
Hostess. What! would'st thou take the maid?
Wilf. Not *take* her, dame!
Hostess. I knew't.
Wilf. You're over quick;
You stop my speech, nor know the way 'twould run!
Hostess. 'Twould run? It runs, I wot, no other way
Than that of half thy sex, when they find out
A woman's dower's herself.
Wilf. You wrong me, dame!
Hostess. Why, said you not you would not take the maid?
Wilf. I grant I did; but—
Hostess. But! Give me no buts!
Say downright no at once!—"But this—but that;
You love us—but! You'd wed us—but!" As much
You'd love as you would wed! You'd wed, be sure,

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If sure you loved! Yet you *do* love, you say,
But cannot wed,—and love indeed you do,
But—in your own coin, to be quits with you,
You love not for ourselves!
Wilf. I'faith, not so!
And to convince you that your thought doth hold
The counter-course to that which mine doth steer,
I'll say I'd take the maid; but——
Hostess. There!
Wilf. Nay, peace!
Thwart not my soul, of which to judge the love,
Thou must partaker of its essence be.
Take her!—Take fortune, honours, fame! They're things
We hunt for;—they're the eager chase, that so
Inspirits us,—despite its length, its stops,
Its perils, its escapes, and accidents,—
We keep it up with cheer! and what are these
To this excelling maid?—I would not *take*—
For that were to suppose a thing obtain'd,
Untoil'd, and unadventured for—I'd win her!
Hostess. And worthy were to win! How say you, Bess?
Wilt thou to church be led by him? Nor no,
Nor yes? I marvel what a maid would say,
Who, when she's ask'd to church, doth hang her head!
Is't no?—No, Bess?—An angel to a crown
'Tis no! but no to no, that answers no.
Sweet Bess, hadst e'er thy fortune read to thee?
Show me thy hand. How white a thing it is!
What's here? Here's line, and line, and ne'er a cross—
A lucky hand! Look! Saw you e'er the like?
Methinks this hand betoken should, a maid
Not like to wed—for wedlock's still, you know,
The cross of womankind. She'll never wed!
You think she will, I see, and doubt my skill?
Then try your own, and read the hand yourself.
Wilf. This precious hand,—had I the skill to read,
Great as the will, and fortune it foretold,
Past what could e'er be mine. I'd wish it well!
Though what its hope did build, of mine were wreck!

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If adverse was its promise !—lucklessness
Through life, unpurchased foes, unstable friends,
Afflictions, beggary, in all—but love—
And I the one to keep thee rich in that !—
'Fore hands with fortune's pledges fair o'erwrit,
I'd covet thine, and for that only gift,
Compound for all beside ! Didst press my hand ?
Thou didst !—Thou didst !—Deny it not, while stands
That glowing witness on thy modest cheek,
To back my tongue ? I'faith, love's day doth come,
And that's the dawn, or never yet did beam
His golden sun on earth ! And I to be
Its harbinger to her ! Come, let us seek
Thy parents. Rich enough are they for me,
Whose blessing leaves me not a wish to bless !

LORD THOMAS WILLOUGHBY *enters with Attendants.*

Will. 'Tis she ! For once hath rumour spoken truth !
[*Aside.*
Base hind, forbear—nor lock thy arms on one
Thy knee were much too graced to wait upon—
And straight resign to me my peerless bride ;
For know, whom thou esteem'st a beggar's child,
Is daughter to a baron of descent,
The highest in the land.

Wilf. A baron's child !
And bride to thee !

Bess. Oh, no !—No baron's child !
My father is a wandering beggar-man !
I would not be a baron's child :—yea, child
Unto a king—and least of all be bride to him !

Will. I'faith thou art a baron's child ;—I'faith
Thou art my bride ;—such gives thee out the tongue,
Whose word is law ; 'twere treason to dispute.

Wilf. What say'st thou, Bess ?

Bess. I'm bride to none but thee !
Thou that wouldst wed me, though a beggar's child,
Were I a baron's child, shouldst wed me still !
Take mind for mind, and heart for heart from me !
I saw thee, and I loved thee !—Grows my tongue
Too bold ?—Forgive it for the bashfulness

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That could not pay thy love with one poor word,
Until another did dispute with thee
What eye, and ear, and heart, and soul, and all
Bear witness is thine own!—where are thine arms?—
Or didst thou mock to say I was their treasure?
[WILFORD *clasps her in his arms.*

Will. [*Drawing his sword.*] Forbear, I say! thy life's in jeopardy!
Lo! the commands of her whose will behoves
The proudest not to question. [*Gives a paper.*

Wilf. What, to thee!
Convicted here of violence,
Offered to her, thou now wouldst make thy bride!
Not for the queen will I resign her to thee.
[*Drawing too.*

Will. You talk it mightily!

Wilf. I'll do it too.
Look you,—a man will let one take his life,
Ere he'll give up his purse, and that, perhaps,
Will hold a score of crowns. It hath been done
For less. Come, state the sum thou'dst set against her!
What's its amount? Come, name't. Couldst borrow it
From usury? Couldst find it in the mint?
In that which feeds the mint—the unwasting mine?
Couldst eke it out with diamonds, and the rest
Of all the brood of gems? Couldst fancy it?—
And shall I give her up, that have the right
To keep her? Never with my will! She's mine!
You see she is! You see her choice no less
Doth hold her here, than do the arms, my soul,
With force of thousand arms, doth lock upon her.
Advance an inch, thy life's not worth a straw!

Hostess. A spark! A spark among a thousand! Take
His word, good sir. He's one that says and does!
The man for me I'd wed, were I a maid!
[*Music without.*

Will. Abide the cost of your rebellion, slave!
The queen herself is here!
[*March. Procession as before:* QUEEN, *&c.*
QUEEN *dismounts.*

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Queen. Ha, swords without their cases! What is this
Salutes mine eye surpassing all before,
Which it hath learn'd of nature's cunning fairness?
How! you that have the charge of him, lead forth
The Beggar of Bethnal Green.
Bess. My parents!
Al. and Emma. Bess!
Queen. I knew it must be she. Hast found her, sir?
The star that look'd upon thy birth was fair—
For had she been indeed a beggar's child,
She yet had been thy bride. The truant ring
That did betray thee, still was faithful to thee:
This hour your nuptials shall be solemnised!
Bel. Contain thyself! her hand she'll never give.
Wilf. Does she—she may! Refuses she, let him
That dares, attempt to take it!
Hostess. Hold to that;
I would were I a man!
Queen. Yet,—ere we tax
The labour of the priest,—the parents' rank,
To me and to this lord alone divulged,
Befits it others know. That document
Which to our hand her father did confide?
[*To Attendant. Paper is brought,* QUEEN *reads.*
Lord Woodville read and say, concerns thee aught
This history? [*Giving him the paper.*
Wood. It does! If truth it speaks—
Which doubt I not—the beggar is my brother;
A brother, that from me did, living, ne'er
Receive a brother's right, but hate for love;
And yet whose death to love converted hate.
Alb. Octavius!
Wood. Albert!
Alb. Brother!
Wood. O forgive,
And with thy lands receive a brother back!
[*They embrace.*
Queen. My chaplain, ho!
Come tie the knot!
Wilf. I have a feeling now

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Of what it is to die—the heavy pause,
Ere life goes out!
Queen. What wait you for, sir priest?
Chaplain. Her hand to give, the maiden doth refuse.
Wilf. She does! She's true! She's mine!
Queen. Who's he that speaks?
Wood. A peasant, please your majesty!
Will. A hind,
Your grace, who claims my bride!
Wilf. Thy bride? She's mine!
Prize of my love, proud lord! that coveted
Her love when she was low, as now she's high,
And won it!—won it!—won, what all thy gold,
Thy lands, thy honours, thy alliances,
Could never win for thee! what, peasant as
I am, makes me the peer, that would not change
Condition with thee, wast thou twice as high.
Hostess. A spark to win a woman!
Will. Villain, hence.
Wilf. Proud lord, I fling the foul term back at thee!
Nor call thee villain mere, but traitor foul!
Who knew'st thy mistress was a virgin queen,
Yet strovest to rob a virgin of her pride,
By villain force! Ha! do I make thee blench?
Cower'st thou before me, peasant though I am?
Has not the blood of all thy noble line,
The power to hearten thee, and make thee stand
Erect in presence of the nameless brow
That's bent upon thee with an honest scowl?
Command'st me hence?—Hence, rather thou! and learn
Whose merits do behind their titles lag
Were better go undubb'd,—whilst lowest hind,
That's lord of noble deed, is lord enough.
Queen. Secure that hind who dares to brave a lord.
Bess. O great and royal mistress! rate him not,
By what he seems. If nature marketh blood,
Then is the peasant of condition fair,
As any in your court. If to be high—
If to be truly gentle—be to shine
In valiant bearing, generosity,
Love, which the eye of fortune follows not

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For guidance where to smile,—a noble and
The noblest noble should the peasant be!
O sovereign gracious, that art mistress of
A woman's costliest heart, look down on mine,
Which through mine eyes doth now look up to thee!
And let me not for bankrupt pass in love,
Disinterestedness, and constancy,
With all the means and all the will to pay.
Give him the baron's daughter, who would take
The beggar's child to wife!

Queen. It must not be.

Al. O most gracious queen, a picture wears my child,
The likeness of her father ta'en in his youth;
Command her show it you.

Queen. That picture, girl! [BESS *gives the picture.*
Feature for feature 'tis the peasant's own:—
A light breaks on me—my Lord Woodville,
Where is that truant son of thine, we wont
In sport to dub our hero of romance?

Wood. Your grace, an age it is since I have seen him.

Queen. Enough! a pretty masque it is they play!
I'll try the mettle of her constancy. [*To* BESS.
Give me this bauble, and that other one
Thou wearest in thy heart, throw far from it;
For, by our title to the crown we wear,
We vow no peasant e'er shall call thee wife!

Bess. Recal, recal the vow!

Queen. Recal thy heart,
If thou hast given it him.

Bess. I cannot do't.

Queen. No?

Bess. No! He is its owner—master—lord!
Yes, I avow it, peasant though he is,
I could not take it from him, if I would!
I would not were he less, if less could be!
No, not to give it to the proudest he
That glitters in your court!

Al. Oh thwart her not,
Most gracious mistress,—from adversity
I've learned!—instruction makes me venerate
Deeds more than circumstance. His deeds approve

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That he doth love my child—her heart is his.
I would not from her heart her hand disjoin,
For gain of wealth or state!

Queen. He dies for this!
Nay, gasp not, maid. 'Tis but the peasant dies,
To give thee in a baron's noble heir,
The lover whom thy constancy hath won!
Young lord,—thou see'st how fortune, to revenge
The wrong thou wouldst have done this noble maid,
When thou esteemed'st her of low degree,
Now that she proves fit partner for thy bed,
Consigns her to another's worthier arms.

[*To* LORD THOMAS.

We pardon thee thy trespasses, atoned
By loss of sight, and long privations borne.

[*To* ALBERT.

Lord Woodville, join thy niece to thine own son,
For there indeed he stands; and greetings spare,
Until we see their nuptials solemnised;
Which we ourselves under our conduct take.
Pageant and masque shall grace their wedding day,
And poets vie while they rehearse the tale
Of Bess, the beggar's maid of Bethnal Green.

END OF THE BEGGAR OF BETHNAL GREEN.

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THE DAUGHTER:

A PLAY.

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TO

JOHN GARDNER, ESQ.

(LATE OF GLASGOW, NOW OF APALACHICOLA, IN WEST FLORIDA.)

—•—

My dear John,

Accept the Dedication of this Play, as a small acknowledgment of a large debt of Friendship.

Yours gratefully,

and affectionately,

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

London,
29*th November*, 1836.

Hosted by Google

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT DRURY LANE, IN 1836.)

Robert	(Father to Marian)	MR. KNOWLES.
Norris		MR. WARDE.
Wolf	(Friend to Norris)	MR. DIDDEAR.
Edward	(In Love with Marian)	MR. COOPER.
Clergyman		MR. MATTHEWS.
Philip	(Wreckers)	MR. BAKER.
Ambrose		MR. F. COOKE.
Stephen		MR. BRINDAL.
Jailor		MR. HENRY.
Constable		MR. FENTON.
Bailiff		MR. MEARS.
Marian	(In Love with Edward)	MISS HUDDART.

SCENE—THE COAST OF CORNWALL.

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THE DAUGHTER.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Shore on the Coast of Cornwall.*

Enter PHILIP, AMBROSE, *and others.*

Phil. Our craft is scandalized! We strip the dead!
But what of that? The dead but want a grave!
We give it them; we take what they can spare.
Amb. You're right; we do no more!
Phil. As to the rights
Of the living, whom they leave behind, let men
Look to their own! If not, why let it go!
Is it for us to stand the drenching rain!
Wade to our necks into the sea! perhaps
Take boat and pull among the breakers, at
The peril, every moment, of our lives,
For their behoof, while they lie snug in bed;
Loll o'er their fires, or sit around their feasts?
Methinks there's reason in the wrecker's trade!
Amb. There is. He risks, and toils for what he gets.
Phil. But then he does no mischief to the dead,
More than the waves have done!—and if there be
Among us, one that does, he's not of us.
Those marks of violence, which hands alone,
Not rocks, and waves, that have not hands, can leave,
Are scandal to our name!
Amb. 'Tis clear, foul play
Has oft of late been done, and chiefly there

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Enter NORRIS.

Where Norris takes his stand! What right has he
To make that reef his own?
Nor. Who talks of me?
What of Black Norris?—Humph!—You envy him!
"What right has he to make that reef his own?"
The right you all would stand on if you could—
The right of might!
Phil. Who thought of seeing him?
Who dream'd that he was near?
Nor. I am a dark
And surly man!—Am I the worse for that?
May not the heart that's here be soft as yours?
The man that's ever smiling, still speaks soft—
And no one here would pass for such a man—
I'd never trust! He'll prove a hypocrite!
The sky doth change its 'haviour—'tis no rogue;
And why not man that lives beneath the sky,
If he be honest? Marks of violence
On bodies wash'd ashore! You want to know
How they came there? I'll tell you—Why, by hands!
Is not that frank?—I'll tell you something more—
'Twas not by mine. It follows not, because
The hair is rough, the dog's a savage one!
Amb. 'Tis true.
Nor. Come, come, hang no man for his looks!
The thing's disgrace! Let's put a stop to it;
And each man do his best, to find him out,
That brings the shame upon us—be it me,
Or you, or him, or whomsoe'er it may;
And hunt him not by looks! Such hounds—you know
What hounds are, I suppose—are oft at fault!
Sleek looks may be companions of rough heart!
I have found it many a time! As for the reef
You say I make my own—you're welcome to it!
But take it if you dare. [*Aside—goes out.*
Amb. We've done him wrong.
Phil. I know not.
Amb. Think the best! Come; in the end
It may be as he says. Whate'er we've thought,
No guilt has been brought home to him—although

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His father is no better than he should be,
And sees far lands, by favour of the law.
Let's keep awake! Each think the watch his own!
Whispers grow loud, and we must silence them,
Else we'll be look'd to, and our trade's at end!
[*They go out on different sides.*

SCENE II.—*Cliffs—with the Shore in the Distance—A Ship in the Offing.*

Enter EDWARD *and* MARIAN, *hand in hand.*

Edw. Look blithe, my pretty Marian! The true heart
Should ne'er be a misgiving one!—My girl,
My gentle girl, look blithe!—Didst ever see
So fair a day?—There's scarce a cloud in sight!
The breeze is just the one our vessel likes;
Jib, spanker, all will draw! Tight-water boat,
Stanch crew, bold captain,—Marian, what's to fear?

Mari. Absence, that gives to lovers taste of death!
And long protracted makes them wish for death!
So wearisome to bear! When last you left,
So long you stay'd,—life, from a precious gift,
Became a load methought I could lay down,
Nor deem it loss, but gain!—my constant thought,
How time did break his promise, day by day,
To bring thee back to me. O! of the sighs
I have heaved in an hour I could have found a wind,
Had I the cunning to make store of them,
Would cause thy ship to heel! There have I sat,
From coming in to going out of light,
Perch'd, like a lonely beacon, on the cliff,
Watching for thee;—and if I saw a speck,
I thought thee there—and, when it pass'd away,
I felt the pangs of parting o'er again!
How long wilt be away?

Edw. A month.

Mari. Say two!
I'll make my mind up to two months—and then,
If thou return'st before the time, thou know'st

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It will be usury of happiness!
Thou'lt stay two months!—Two months is a long time!
Edw. I tell thee but a month!
Mari. I'll not believe it;
For, if I should, and thou beyond shouldst stay,
Each hour beyond will be another month:
So, for my two months, may I pine two-score!
Nay, for two months I will not look for thee!
Edw. And then we marry.
Mari. So my father says.
Edw. O Marian, when thou'rt mine!
Mari. Thou wilt not go
Again to sea.
Edw. No, girl!—Another trip,
We are rich enough! How love hath made us wise!
When boy and girl, we talk'd as man and wife;
And 'gan to hoard 'gainst days of housekeeping.
Our first small venture—what a heap it brought!
Its value more than ten times doubled! 'Twas
That Heaven did bless it!—Marian, that's the luck!
And since that lucky day, whate'er we've tried
Has thriven with us still.
Mari. Thank Heaven, it has.
Edw. Ay!—And the saint who taught me on her knee,
"No life so happy as an honest one!"—
Thy mother!—Thy dear mother, Marian.—
Mari. She loved thee!
Edw. Yes!—What were a wrecker's gains
Compared to ours? To think that they're our own!
None to dispute them with us!—No, not e'en
A dead man's bones! I have kept my watch on deck,
In a gale, the billows higher than our cliffs;
That, looking from their tops, you wonder'd how
The vessel could go down, and rise again,
While, as she heel'd until her yard-arms duck'd,
You thought each moment shrowd and brace would crack,
And every mast at once be overboard!
Thus have I kept my watch; and then I have found
The best of treasures was a conscience, whole!

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And, with my venture in my chest below,
Would not have changed that slanting, creaking deck,
To take the wrecker's station on the shore,
With wind and wave at work, and breaking up
A fast and rich galleon! Marian,
Why dost thou hang thy head?
Mari. My father is
A wrecker.
Edw. So was mine, my Marian.
What then? We're not the children of their trade!
Pass but another month—Well, I'll say two—
And change of state shall bring us change of scene.
We'll quit these haunts, and ply some inland calling!
Why turn'st thou pale, my girl? What frightens thee?
I only see Black Norris—fear'st thou him?
Mari. Yes!—No!—I fear, yet know not cause to fear—
No just cause!—Yet—Thank Heaven he's gone again!
Edw. He dared offend thee once, but paid the forfeit;
And durst not offer wrong to thee again!
Hast other cause to fear him, Marian?
Mari. When last you were at sea, the weary nights
Thy mother and thy Marian did beguile,
As ever in thy absence they were wont,
With talk of thee; and, growing sad with that,
Old tales of marvel, from her ample store,
The kindly dame would tell—peace to her spirit!—
I shall not have her now to comfort me!
Edw. Don't speak of that! Go on.
Mari. One dreary night,
A wrecker was the story—banish'd son,
And worse than banish'd father, that did watch
A vessel fast upon the Goodwin Sands.
Edw. I know!—The body of a man was wash'd
Ashore. The wrecker fell to rifling it,
But life was in the body.
Mari. That's the tale.
The wrecker heard him groan—so, conscience-wrung,
He did confess—and, to secure his prey,
Destroy'd what Heaven had bade the tempest spare;

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Stopp'd with his hands the holy breath of life,
And watching, for assurance that the work
Of foulest sin was done, by the wild glare
Of the lightning, which just then did rend the clouds,
And light the murderous tempest ghastly up,
Beheld the feature of his banish'd boy,
By his own hands compress'd; and stiff in death!

Edw. But what hath this to do with him, the sight
Of whom recall'd the tale?

Mari. His father is
A convict, serving in a distant land.
His term of shame, almost expired; for crime
Done on the storm-strewn shore.

Edw. I know he is.

Mari. I mused on them, as by thy mother's hearth
I sat; which soon, methought, began to spread
Into our bay—a furious tempest on,—
Men, women, children watching here and there,
On the look-out for some unlucky barque,
Its wrath might catch, and strand upon the shore!
There was the lightning, and the thunder, and
The rain and wind, and rattling shingles, as
The billows, mountain high, came tumbling in,
And there stood Norris, on that reef of his.

Edw. Go on, as 'twere a real tale thou told'st,
Thou fixest me, with eagerness to hear.

Mari. Then came a vessel—a huge hulk—without
A single mast left standing;—such a one
Was wreck'd upon the coast three winters gone,
When thou wast far at sea—I witness'd it.

Edw. That ship did come to mind.

Mari. O how she heaved,
And sank, and reel'd, until at last she struck
Right on the wrecker's reef! when soon she went
To pieces.—Then the body of a man
Was wash'd on shore, and Norris sprang upon it;
But life, as in the story I had heard,
Was in it still; and Norris took that life!
He stabb'd the shipwreck'd man—and lo! it was
His father!—I did dream the very same
That very night. And often since, in sleep,

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Ay, and in waking too, have seen 't again—
Have seen the bay, the tempest, and the ship;
The body floating in, and Norris there,
Rifling it of its life—the body of
His father! Strange things have been thought of him;
And never look I on that scowling man,
But I do think I see a murderer!—
But thou art going, and I talk of him!
I know not wherefore, but I never felt
So sad before at parting!
Edw. Fear'st for me?
Mari. No!—Thou art good!—Hast trust in Heaven
—implorest
Its mercy night and morn! 'Twill show it thee!
Thou'lt find it 'mid the tempest—near the shoal
Off the lee-shore!—or, if thy vessel strike,
Or founder, surer than the sea-bird's wing
The sea-bird, it will float thee 'bove the wave,
And bear thee to thy native cliff again!
I have no fears for thee!—I think—I know
Thou wilt come back to me! Thou hast no fears?
Edw. None, Marian!
Mari. But thou hast!—I'm sure thou hast!
I see a trouble in thy face!—I do!
Thou fear'st for something!—What is it?
Edw. I would
Thou hadst not told me of Black Norris.
Mari. Why?
See'st aught in what I told thee?—Dost thou think
My dream bodes ill?—that something's sure to come?
Think'st thou there's ought in dreams? Don't answer
me!
I don't believe there is!
Edw. There is not, girl!
Mari. Why wish then what thou didst?
Edw. He gives thee pain.
Mari. I will not see him again! I nothing see
When thou'rt away. The sun, the earth, the sea—
All things without are gone—I have no eye,
No ear—except within—within, where only
Then can I see and hear thee!—Where I'm with thee

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At sea—on shore—and oft in hardest strait
Of peril—where I'm always nearest to thee,
With superhuman power to bear thee through,
In spite of sternest danger! There's the gun!
Edw. Farewell!—
Mari. I'll see thee to the beach!—I will—
Ay, to the water's edge! That I could go
Along with thee!—The waves might rise and roar,
I would not hear or see them!—Come.
Edw. Nay, here
We'll part—my messmates, girl, will laugh at thee.
Mari. Let them! What! lose a minute—with an age
To come of absence! I, that would brave the sea
To go with thee, heed those the sea doth toss!
I'll go with thee e'en to the water's edge!
And then mine eyes shall go along with thee!
And when thou leavest them, and they must stop
My thoughts—my heart—my soul—which water, land,
Air, nothing 'neath the sun can tear thee from!

[*They go out.*

SCENE III.—*The inside of* ROBERT'S *Cottage.* ROBERT *seated in the centre, occupied in splicing an oar.*

Enter STEPHEN—*a lad.*

Rob. Well, Stephen! what of the ship?
Ste. She's under way
With every yard of canvas spread.
Rob. The wind
Is fair.
Ste. A point, or more, abaft the beam.
A ten-knot breeze, and steady.
Rob. So it seems.
'Twill change ere night.
Ste. I see no signs of it.
Rob. You know them not when you do see them, Stephen;
Though a good sailor, you're a young one yet;
But I am an old acquaintance of the weather.
"A point," you say, "or more, abaft the beam?"

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Then is the vane north-west. Ne'er heed the vane,
Look ever to the cloud, the weathercock
Behoves the shipman heed, which tells what wind
Will come. How steers the cloud?

Ste. North-west.

Rob. That's right
Against the ship which now sails with the wind!
Now mark my words! Ere night the wind will take
Her merry sails aback, and talk to her!
And bid her clew her gay topgallants up!
There will be call for reefs, and work for sheets
And halyards! "Fore sheet, fore top bowling!"
Throughout the night will keep a busy watch!
But she'll have sea-room, and no gull more light
Doth sit the wave than she. Here! Lend a hand!

[STEPHEN *goes to* ROBERT *and assists him.*

Where's Marian?

Ste. I left her on the beach
Following the 'parting ship with all her eyes!
I call'd to her—the sands on which she stood
Had ears as much as she!—She heard me not.
I turn'd to mark if she did follow me—
As well expect the sea.—It moved, but she
Stood still—in plight as sad, as barque that's driven
Upon a quicksand, settling fast, and sure
Never to come away!

Rob. Her mother's vein
Is in the girl!—So fond a wife was she,
That marriage, which with most is end of love,
With me was only the beginning on't!——
She had been early sent to school—remain'd there
Till she could teach where first she had been taught.
You see the girl she made my Marian!
She made me good, for she was goodness' self,
Reclaim'd me from a wrecker, for a time.
But evil habits, Stephen, like old sores,
Are seldom safe from breaking out again!
One night arose the cry "A ship on shore!"
I had been out carousing at a wedding—
The love of my old trade came strong upon me—
Down to the beach I flew and fell to work.

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Unheeding she did follow! Three whole hours
Remain'd she standing in the pelting storm!
I found her with the blood wash'd out of her
White as our cliff—cold, stiff, and motionless!
My ill-got spoil I soon exchanged for her,
Nor set her down till in our bed I laid her—
But Heaven did know she was too good for me;
For from that bed she never rose again!
[*Turns from* STEPHEN.
What of the ship?—Go to the door and see!
Ste. She's hull down.
Rob. Any other sail in sight?
Ste. Three to the Westward.
Rob. Up or down channel?—which?
Ste. Up channel do they bear.
Rob. One of the three
May come ashore to-night.
Ste. The ship has changed
Her course!
Rob. The wind has changed!—tis right a-head!
She's on the larboard tack—Is it not so?
Ste. It is.
Rob. It looks thick weather round the ship,
Does not it?
Ste. Yes.
Rob. And 'twill grow thicker! Storm
Is in the air, though here 'tis sunshine still.
I feel it! It will blow great guns to-night;
The scud will gallop and the waves will leap!
A cloud has just come o'er the sun! What kind
Of cloud?
Ste. A streaky one, and black and low,
Stretching from East to West, and in its wake
A fleet of others.
Rob. To be sure! I know it.
As well as you that see it.—Get my axe,
Boat-hook, and grapple—Lay them here beside me.
[STEPHEN *goes out and returns with the things.*
A storm is coming on from the South-East,
Right from the sea—full on the shore! The ship
Is lost that keeps not a good offing, for

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The sea, in such a wind as cometh on,
Rolls in like a spring-tide, and surely sweeps
Into our bay the unwary barque, that hugs
This iron-bound inhospitable shore!
What offing keep the ships?
Ste. Two miles, the first,
And more.
Rob. She's safe. The second?
Ste. Scarce a mile.
Rob. She'll have her work to do, to clear the bay!
Behoves her to sail well upon a wind!
Lie high! Be lively in her stays! The third?
Ste. Not half a mile. The first ship is about!
Rob. The wind has come to her! That's the new wind
I told you of!—the wind that brings the storm!
Will make the tackle sing! the bulk-heads creak!
Try braces, shrowds and all! The very wind
For the wrecker! I did see it at one o'clock!
Ste. The second ship is now about.
Rob. She is?
Ste. And bearing from the land. The third ship—
Rob. Ay?
Well, what of her?—Is she about too?
Ste. No,
She misses stays! They ware her!
Rob. Is she deep?
Ste. She is.
Rob. Within the head?
Ste. Within the head.
Rob. How far?
Ste. A quarter of a mile.
Rob. A wreck!
Sure as she's now afloat!
Ste. Here's Marian.

Enter MARIAN, *abstracted.*

Rob. My Marian! My child! Her thoughts are
Upon the parting ship. How does my girl? [still
Mari. [*Coming to herself, and running to* ROBERT.]
Well, father, well! What have you there? Your axe,
Boat-hook, and grapple! Ah!—a storm is coming!

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You're for the shore again !—the heartless shore,
That spares nor ship nor shipman !
Rob. Did it lighten ?
Ste. It did.
[ROBERT *rises and takes up his wrecker's implements.*
Mari. Stay, father, stay ! Sit down again
And listen to me.
Rob. [*Resuming his seat.*] Well ?
Mari. How canst thou bear
To strip the seaman, whom the winds do strip—
The waves—the rocks—which know not what they do;
But thou dost know, and ought'st to feel ! To live
Upon the plunder of the elements !
The havock of whose fury it should be
Thy labour to repair ! The drowning man
Forgot, to get possession of the mite
For which he bides the perils of the sea !
And, if he sinks, is not his bubbling breath—
That calls upon the friends he leaves behind—
A testament, more strong than pen can write,
To make assurance unto those he loves
Of aught the billows spare ? Thy boat-hook drops—
Give me thy axe.
Ste. The storm is on ! It thunders !
Mari. It is the voice of Heaven in anger !—calls
On men for pity to each other—each
Alike in peril placed !—Let go thy axe !
Think of the axe that's lifted now above
And falling fast !—might it not light on thee ?
Let go thy axe !—O the poor ship—poor crew !
That hear the thunder which the ship hears not !
O their poor wives ! poor children ! and poor friends !
That pray this hour some help may be at hand !
Hear me, my father ! Have not you a child ?
Were you at sea !—were you within that ship !
Give me your axe—and now that coil of rope—
Your grapple—give it me !
Ste. A gun !
Rob. It is
The signal of distress.

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Mari. Thy grapple, father!
Rob. I tell thee, Marian, not a soul can live
In such a sea as boils within our bay.
Mari. And shouldst thou therefore strip the drowned man?
O! at his death-bed, by the side of which
No friend doth stand, there is a solitude
Which makes the grave itself society!—
Helplessness, in comparison with which
An ordinary death is kin to life!—
And silence, which the bosom could fill up
With thoughts more aching, sad, and desolate
Than ever utter'd wailing tongues of friends
Collected round the bier of one beloved!—
To rifle him!—purloin his little stock
Of gold, or jewels, or apparel!—take
And use it as thine own!—thou!—thou! whom Heaven
Permits to see the sun that's set to him;
And treasures ten times dearer than the sun
Which he shall never see!—O touch it not!
Or if thou touch it—drop it, and fall down
Upon thy knees, at thought of what he was,
And thou, through grace, art still!
Rob. Her mother's voice!
Her mother's words!—Here, take the coil!—Put by
My boat-hook and my axe!—My Marian,
I'll not go to the beach!
Mari. [*Having laid the things by.*] Heaven guard his ship!
Rob. Thy lover's?—Fear not! She has sea-room!—She's
A bird upon the sea!
Mari. I am weary, father!
Rob. Go to thy bed—Thou art mind and body-worn!
Mari. I will! You'll mind?
Rob. I will, my Marian. [MARIAN *goes out.*
Ste. Another gun!
Rob. And nearer than the first!
She's driving in apace!—Who pass'd the door?
Ste. Black Norris.

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Rob. He will make a mint to-night!

Ste. She takes the ground!—Her masts are overboard!

Rob. Black Norris will not spare, and why should I?
The waves won't spare, and why should he or I?
Chests, bales will come ashore!—cordage and spars,
Hatchets will go to work!—No one will spare,
And why should I?—Not I!—I'll have my share!
[*Takes up the boat-hook, &c.*

Mari. [*Rushing in.*] Father!

Rob. My child, go in!

Mari. Thou go'st not forth!

Rob. I must!

Mari. O father! 'tis unhallow'd work!

Rob. Go thou to rest.

Mari. And thou at work like that?
How wouldst thou sleep if I were doing wrong?
I will not let thee forth!

Rob. Come from the door!

Mari. Father!—when Heaven doth bid me shut the door?

Rob. Bid thee who may, I'll open it!—Give way!
[*Forces her from it—she falls.* ROBERT *and* STEPHEN *go out.*

Mari. Father!—I'm stunn'd! He's gone!—How could he go!
O vice that's early planted!—Hard to weed it!
Plant virtue early!—Give the flower the chance
You suffer to the weed!—To hope success
Where my poor mother fail'd!—Heaven pity him!
Heaven pity him—and I, his child, on earth,
And not attempt to save him!—Father!—Father!—
[*Rushes out.*

END OF ACT I.

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ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Vicinity of the Shore.*

Enter WOLF *and* NORRIS, *meeting.*

Nor. Wolf!
Wolf. Norris!
Nor. For the shore?
Wolf. Yes.
Nor. Whence I come.
In my o'er haste, what think you I forgot?
My wrecker's gear! I left them all behind!
My hatchet, boat-hook, grapple, e'en my knife!
[*Going.*
Wolf. [*Stopping him.*] Tarry a while! Take breath!
Your knife and axe,
Boat-hook and grapple, are not needed yet.
'Tis but the first of flood. Until the tide
Shall lift her o'er the outer bank, she'll hold
Together. Tarry here and look at her!
I have heard of fine sights; ay, and seen them too!
Now what's the finest sight a man can see?
Nor. The finest sight?—a ship ashore, in a bay
Like ours, ten miles and more from any town;
A black sky, a white water, and a shore
All iron-bound, and boiling round with breakers.
No sight like that for me! What tonnage is she?
Wolf. Four hundred and above. I know a ship,
And not so large a one, you had rather were
Aground than she.
Nor. I know the ship you mean;
She left the bay at noon. You're right! I hate
That ship! I hate her for the sake of one
She carries. Were my father in that ship
I'd laugh to see her drown?—One whom they call
A good young man—only another name
For a limb of the devil! No young man can be good!
We are young, and know we not what we are?—
Good!—

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What should make others better?—Better natures?
There's no such thing!—all mankind are the same;
Circumstance makes a difference. Circumstance
Is not the man! Had I that fair-skinn'd girl,
Old Robert's daughter!—her of the dainty limb,
Round swelling form, and dimpled lady cheek—
Had I that girl for messmate, or could have,
You'd see how soon I'd be a good young man,—
Though devil at the bottom still—as he!

Wolf. You fancy her.—Why not make up to her?

Nor. I told you, now, the sight which most I love.
Wouldst learn the sight which most I hate? Thou shalt.
The show of good, in man or woman,—but,
In woman most.—That's strange!—I hate the sight
Of a modest woman! 'Tis an eyesore to me!
I never look on one, but straight I fall
To gazing on myself; and then I writhe,
At thought of what I am, and what she seems;
Until I show, unto myself, a beast!—
Yea, a brute beast!—and stand like one before her,
Gazing, and stupid,—dumb!

Wolf. 'Tis strange!

Nor. It is.
I have tried to court her—have accosted her,
But ever, as that lady cheek of hers
She has turned to me, my speech has failed me, and
I have stood stock-still, confounded at myself;
And like a chid cur, slunk at last away!
Strange! that the only show of goodness should
So daunt a bold man, that he dares not do
The thing he dares to wish.

Wolf. You mean her fair?

Nor. I do; but e'en for fair ends cannot take
Fair means; as smiling, speaking pretty things,
Pretty behaviour, creeping inch by inch!
I'd have her at a bound! That's not the way
She would be won. With opportunity
I'd woo her though.

Wolf. What do you mean?

Nor. No matter.
'Tis said they'll marry when this trip is done.

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Now would old Robert take a sail, and leave
The girl alone, I'd promise him that's gone
A merry wedding when his ship comes back.
How goes it on in the bay? She has moved methinks
Since last we look'd.
Wolf. She will not clear the bank
Before high water, or about it.
Nor. And
The storm you see holds on! A lovelier,
Did never break a stranded vessel up!
And plenty on't! 'Twill last till midnight.—Black
As it can look, and right in the wind's eye!
Ay, steady that!—How slow the tide comes in,
And yet the wind to help it! O'er the bank
And on the rough ground, she'll not hold together
The quarter of an hour! I'll be prepared.
Tell them I'm coming! They'll be sure to give
A good berth to the reef!
Wolf. I will.
Nor. Make haste! [*They go out severally.*

SCENE II.—*The Sea Shore. Thunder, Lightning, and Wind.*

Enter MARIAN.

Mari. I cannot light on him, and not a soul
I pass'd but I did question!—Where is he?
My brain will burst!—a horrible oppression
Hangs on me; and my senses do discharge
More than their proper parts!—I see – I hear—
Things that I should not—Forms are flitting by me!
Voices are in mine ears, as if of things
That are—and yet I know are not!—Each step
I fear to tumble o'er the body of
Some drowned man!—There's one!—A heap of weeds!
O what wild work do fear and fancy make!
Did some one cry?—Well?—What?—Where are you?—No!
'Tis nobody! What is't that still keeps up

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This moaning in my ears, as if of words
Utter'd in agony ? 'Tis not the sea !
'Tis not the wind !—I hear them both. 'Tis not
The wreckers on the shore !—They utter nought
But sounds of gladness. 'Tis not the ship !—she's out
Of hearing. Am I growing mad ?—What spot
Is this I stand upon ?—What brought me here ?
'Tis here they say a girl one time went mad,
Seeing a murder done !—she was in quest
Of her brother ; and she saw a scuffle and
Approach'd the struggling men, just as the one
Did cast the other down. Although 'twas night,
She saw a knife gleam in the lifted hand
Of the uppermost ! She tried to call—so she said,
When reason did at last return—but power
Of utterance was gone. Thrice it descended,
With a dull, griding sound ;—and then, a voice,
Which stabb'd her heart and brain, exclaim'd—" He's
dead !"
It was her brother's voice. 'Tis strange that fear
Should be a thing almost as strong as death !
Should shut the lips up—and deprive the limbs
Of motion !—Yet have I a feeling how
The thing may come to pass. The girl alone—
The men upon the ground—one 'bove the other—
The knife in his uplifted hand—it falls !
I feel myself a sense of choking ; and
My feet do seem to cleave unto the ground.
My tongue doth stiffen !—Ha !—[*Shrieks.*]—I have
broke the spell !
I'm by myself !—Another minute,—not
The girl more mad than I !—They are gone !—All gone !
The earth, and air, so thick awhile ago,
With things that neither earth nor air do own,
Are empty now ! Mine ears, and eyes, take note
Of nothing but what is—the booming sea—
The yelling wind—the rattling shingles, as
The waves do roll them up and down again ;
And back my wand'ring thoughts return, to that
Which brought me 'midst their uproar—to persuade
My poor, misguided father to return

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And from his lawless work restrain his hands.
I have traversed all the Westward shore in vain,
I'll search the Eastward now.
[*Starts again at the same heap of weeds.*
Not yet myself!—
'Tis the same heap of weeds I saw before!
[*Goes out.*

SCENE III.—*Another Part of the Shore.*

Enter ROBERT, *followed by* NORRIS.

Nor. Old Robert!—Hoa!—Stop!—Art afraid of me?
Rob. I never fear'd a man.
Nor. Why shun me then?
Rob. I like thee not.
Nor. "Two of a trade!" Is't so?
Well! I'm the luckiest wrecker of you all.
I cannot help it! Fortune bear the blame!
That has her favourites, as all men know.
She has long made one of me! Is it right to hate
A man for his good luck?
Rob. It isn't that.
Nor. It isn't that!—What else?—What can you say
Against me else? A splinter'd spar the waves
Do throw to you—a lock-fast chest to me!
To me the breakers slue the captain in;
Mate—passenger from the Indies, West or East.
A foremast man to you—you know 'tis so,
And like the rest do bear me envy; most
Unlike a man! But fortune ever turns
The evil you do wish me, into good.
I have no partner in my gains—what comes
To hand is all my own! "Afraid of me!"
I said it but in sport. I know you're not
Afraid of me, or any other man,
Or any thing!—Have I not seen you leap
Into a boiling sea, to save a wretch
When his boat founder'd! 'Twas a feat I doubt
If any other of the craft would do!
Wilt go, or tarry? Nay, there's time enough;

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She holds together yet. There's lots of time.
What speed didst come when drove the last on shore ?
Rob. Some coils of cordage ; and a spar or two.
Nor. What then did fortune, think you, throw to me ?
Rob. I cannot tell.
Nor. One hundred guineas, all
But one, lapp'd here and there, in various coin,
In the heavy vest and trowsers of a man—
I mean, a body—that was wash'd ashore.
Here's one of them.
Rob. A broad doubloon.
Nor. How much
Brought you your spars and cordage ? How I laugh'd
To see you, heavy laden, toiling home
With a few crowns' worth, and I going light
With a good hundred guineas, all but one !
And you don't like me !—Why ?—I'm a rough man ;
And low'ring as they say !—but has all fruit
A fair outside ? How ill-favour'd a one
A walnut has—a chestnut—cocoa-nut !
And yet how sweet within !—Yea there is milk
Within the cocoa-nut !—You never know
Some men by their outsides !—Prove them, and then
You'll know them. Here's another piece more broad,
And heavy than the first. Know you the coin ?
Rob. No !—it is strange to me.
Nor. Examine it.
There's something now that I would be about ;
Yet know not what it is !—Ne'er heed ! The Devil
Will prompt me when 'tis time ! [*Aside.*
Rob. I cannot tell
The coin.
Nor. Here ; take a look at this.
Rob. Another !
Nor. Ay !—Will you believe me now ?
Rob. Black Norris, you're
A lucky man !
Nor. " Black Norris !" Well !—it is
My nick-name. You may give it me—more black
May go by fairer name !

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Rob. I meant no harm.

Nor. I know you didn't'!—There's none! I tell you what—

There's not a man of all the crew, but one,
I do not hate. The best were first to 'peach,
When my old father, seven long years ago,
Did something which he could not do by law;
And was transported, for the lack of learning.
He didn't know 'twas wrong!—Well, as I said,
I hate them all, but one! and which is he?—
Yourself—I say no more!—Believe it, or
Believe it not!

Rob. Nay, rather I'd believe it.
I never thought before, you were so frank.

Nor. How could you think?—Grew samphire on yon cliff,

Who'd know't, if no one went to seek it there?
You keep aloof, and—strange!—you know me not!
You, none of you, consort with me, except
Young Wolf, another hang-dog, as they say.
He's a wrong'd man, and so am I—we are friends;
For common wrongs make friends of those that share them.

Rob. 'Tis natural.

Nor. 'Tis right!—as common fortunes,
So likewise doth a common vein, make friends.
My greatest enemy allows me brave!
I cared for thee no more than I did care
For any other of the churlish set;
But, when I saw thee venture thy own life,
With ten to one against thee, for that man,
I took a liking to thee!—That, you may
Believe, or not, as well as the other.

Rob. Nay,
But I believe it.

Nor. You can do no good
To me!—I have nothing to get by you!

Rob. Nothing!

Nor. Have I not? What a silly adage that
About old birds and chaff! [*Aside.*

Rob. Here—here's thy gold.

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Nor. Nay, keep it, an thou wilt.
Rob. Not so, good Norris.
Nor. A rare bird I, to turn from black to white! [*Aside.*
Why, I believe you're right! 'Tis doubtful gain,
To keep a thing that's not one's own! The ship
Is now on the rough ground!—How fair she lies!—
Her broadside to the sea, that not a wave
But tells upon her!—What a cloud of surf
Keeps flying over her!—Look!—There's a sea!
'Twill take her right a midships—Hurra!—Hurra!—
She has parted in the waist!—Old Robert, where
The use of words, when men can talk by deeds!
Yon reef you know is mine—they call it mine,
Because I make it mine—So far it runs
Into the bay, it makes a kind of eddy,
Whose swirl doth sweep all kinds of lumber in
That come within its reach—as prove my gains;
'Tis thine to-day! Go try thy luck upon it.
I'll help thee, if thou need'st—but not to touch
A stiver, though ten bodies should float in,
With pockets cramm'd with gold. There's something! haste!
The waves do snatch as readily as give.
The tide is on the turn—the shore doth shelve
A foot in every nine!
Rob. I thank thee, Norris.
Nor. Off to the reef—Have cause, and thank me then! [ROBERT *goes out hastily.*
It is a body that is wash'd ashore!
I'd know it at twice the distance. A fine torch
The lightning! Rain will never put it out!
A body!—I begin to see it now.
Yes, it is done!
Wolf. [*Entering.*] Well, Norris!
Nor. All is well.
Run to the nearest group of wreckers,—say
You saw old Robert stooping o'er a body—
That you suspect foul play—and bring them to
The reef. He's there—but hold—not quite so fast;
Let me have time to join him.—Go!—don't say

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That I am there. Now, pretty Marian.
[WOLF *goes out.*
Sure as thy lover is this hour at sea,
Thy father takes a trip, and follows him.
Bide there my tackle! I had best go bare!
[*Puts his boat-hook, &c., behind a rock, and goes out.*

SCENE IV. *The shore close to the sea.*

Enter ROBERT, *dragging in a body.*—MARIAN *in the distance, slowly coming down a path cut out of the cliff.*

Rob. The surge won't reach thee there! I warrant
No fear thou'lt go to it. Thy last—last draught, [me
In this world, hath it given thee—a cold,
Unwelcome one! Safe bide thou there! The waves
Are in a giving mood! I'd be at hand
To profit by their bounty. I did think
Some one was near me! Fancy!—How it lightens!
[*Goes out.*

Enter MARIAN.

Mari. The storm distracts me with its din! This roar,
This never-ending roar, which, round and round,
The heavens keep up!—in which the sea doth join,
As though the thunder were not noise enough,
With cries of men and women! I am blind
With the lightning! flash and flash and flash, as quick
As they can follow—mingling light and darkness so,
That scarce you know one moment, which is which!
I'm quite bewilder'd!—I will look above,
Beyond the clouds—beyond the stars! No storm
Is there! no wreck!—no raging sea!—no thunder!
But calm, and warmth, and brightness, as befits
The dwellings of the blest!—My mother's there!
O, my poor father! Here's the storm again!
Sea, thunder, lightning—all come back again!

Re-enter ROBERT—*starts at seeing* MARIAN.

Rob. I have dropp'd my knife, methinks it's somewhere here!

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What's that?—Is it a mortal thing? It makes
My spirit faint within me!—'Tis the form
Of my lost Marian!—Even so she stood
In the storm wherein her life was cast away!
Can she not lie in her grave for me?—Do my sins
Break on her last rest there, and call her thence?
I sent her thither—on such nights as this
I have often look'd about me with the thought
That she was near me. There at last she is!
It is my Marian risen from her grave!
She comes to me!—O powers of grace, preserve me!
[*Kneels.*

Mari. The strength of Heaven!—To see it, yet not feel it!
Before its face to do what it forbids!
And it in anger!—see the weapons of
Its wrath in motion—feel the huge earth shake at them!
And never pay it awe!—stand up to it!
Defy it!—'stead of falling on thy knees,
And asking it for mercy.

Rob. Mercy!

Mari. Ha!
My father!

Rob. Marian!

Mari. On thy knees!—That's right—
Fear not! Thou dost Heaven's bidding!—Do not rise
Until thou risest with its blessing on thee!

Rob. [*Rising.*] What brought thee here, my child? Thou ne'er before
Didst follow me.

Mari. I came to look for thee;
And to persuade thee to come home with me.
Thou tremblest—Thou art pale—as livid as
The lightning! Dost thou hear? 'Tis everywhere!
Not the clouds only, but the very air—
The very sea—the very earth—do thunder!
All—all is din and fire! It is right
For man to tremble!

Rob. 'Tis not that!

Mari. What then?

Rob. I took thee for thy mother, Marian!

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Mari. Think me her still, and what she'd have thee do,
Do, by the love thou still dost bear to her!
Forswear this lawless life!—Thou wouldst not rob
A living man!—'Tis manlier to strip
The living, than the dead!

Rob. This night's the last!

Mari. This night!—O, no!—The last night be the last!
Who makes his mind up that a thing is wrong,
Yet says he'll do that thing for the last time,
Doth but commence anew a course of sin,
Of which that last sin is the leading one,
Which many another, and a worse, will follow!
At once begin! How many, at this hour,
Alive as thou art, will not live to see
To-morrow's light!—If thou shouldst be cut off!
Should thy last sin be done, on thy last night!
Should Heaven avenge itself on that last sin
Thou dost repentingly!—My father, come!—
O! a bad conscience, and a sudden death!
Come home!—Come home!—Come home!

Rob. I'll follow thee.
I'll fetch my boat-hook, and my other gear,
And follow thee. [*Goes out.*

Mari. I'll loiter till you come. [*Goes slowly out.*

Enter NORRIS, *cautiously.*

Nor. Now is the time!—Now! while her back's to me.
Is he dead? There's warmth methinks, about the heart,
More than there should be! 'Tis no matter!—Cowards
May stick at trifles!—Can I find a stone,
To knock him on the head?—What's this?—a knife!
'Tis Robert's!

Mari. [*re-appearing and ascending the cliff.*] What's that you are doing, father?

Nor. She takes me for her father!—Good! She'll see
What I'll do, and think it is her father does it,
And when 'tis done, so will I slink away,

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She can't discover her mistake!—Now for it!

[*He plunges the knife into the body*—MARIAN *utters a faint shriek, and falls senseless.*

She saw it! She is in my power! She's mine!
I'll hence and watch my time. [*Goes out.*

Rob. [*re-entering.*] To leave it there!
And the last time! There's treasure—I did feel it
Hard, hard and bulky! Marian is away!

[*Goes to the body, and empties one pocket.*

What have we here? Some of the bright broad pieces
Black Norris show'd me! What a folly 'twere
To leave them in the pockets of the dead,
And let the living go with empty ones!
I'll count them by and by!—and this is full!

[*Empties the other pocket.*

I'll ease it of its burthen!—Gold! All gold!
Whence comes that glare? Ha!—'Tis the beacon struck
By the lightning, and on fire!

Enter suddenly, AMBROSE, PHILIP, *and others.*

Amb. What do you there,
Old Robert?

Rob. Nothing that I fear to do.

Amb. What hold you in your hand?

Rob. Gold!

Amb. Gold?

Rob. Ay, gold!

Phil. Let's look at the body!—What is here—a knife?

Amb. A knife!

Phil. A knife!—fast in the dead man's breast!

Amb. Pull it out!

Phil. 'Tis Robert's knife!—How came this, Robert?
He is confounded!—See!—he cannot speak.

Amb. Look! What white thing is that, that's lying yonder?

Phil. It is his daughter,—she has slipp'd her foot
And fallen—or swoons with horror of the deed
Perhaps she saw him do. E'er since the storm
Came on, has she been ranging up and down
In search of him.

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Amb. Look to her! Take her home!
For him, we must bestow him somewhere till
To-morrow; and, by turns, keep watch upon him.
How like a guilty man he looks! Come on!
Who ever thought to bring it to his door!
[*They go out.*

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The inside of a Hut.*

ROBERT *discovered pacing to and fro.*

Rob. A murderer!—I, that do sicken at
The sight of blood, to do the deed of blood!
A murderer! and with a hand as free
From blood as an infant's!—To be tried for it!
Condemned, perhaps, and executed!—I!—
That never did it!—Then my branded name,
That don't deserve the brand—and, worse than all,
To leave it to my child—my Marian!
My fair young girl!—Good!—Good!—whom Heaven did send
To save her father, but he would not heed her—
Turn'd a deaf ear unto an angel's lips,
To listen to that devil, the greed of pelf!
That was my crime indeed—but only that;
Some one has circumvented me, but who?
Black Norris? Him or Wolf do I suspect—
But what's suspicion only?—Not a thread
To bind a man with.

Enter NORRIS.

Nor. Robert!
Rob. Is it you,
Black Norris?

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Nor. Yes, 'tis I—Black Norris, as
You call me—come to cheer you.
Rob. Well, Black Norris?
Nor. I don't believe you did that murder.
Rob. No?
Nor. Some one has got the better of you—laid
A trap for you, and caught you—who—Heaven knows!
I say, I don't believe you guilty, but
Appearances are all against you—caught
Stripping the body, with the gold in your hand,
And your knife sticking in the dead man's breast!—
Rob. Who stuck it there?
Nor. Why, how should I tell?
Rob. [*catching hold of* NORRIS.] Nay,
Who stuck it there?
Nor. Not I,
Nor any one I know!—Take off thy hands,
Old man!—I did not come to wrestle with thee;
Wish'd I to play a game, I'd tackle to
With tougher sinews!—For another end
I came—to tell thee 'tis my turn to watch,
And hast thou goods to run, the coast is clear—
Now, grip me by the throat.
Rob. Forgive me, Norris.
Nor. Forgive thee!—Fiddlestick!—Offend me first,
Then ask me to forgive thee. Here is gold
For that they took away from thee.—Away!
Make straight for the East coast!—Take shipping there,
And where thou settlest, advertise me!—Go!—
Rob. [*going, stops short.*] My child! I had forgot her—seek her, seek
And bring her to me! I can't fly from death
Without my child!—I can't forsake my child!
Nor. Forsake thy child!—a stranger now to her
Availeth more than thou. What are the dead
Unto the living?—Nothing!—Not the worth
Of a wheaten straw—That helps to make a light!
You can make nothing of the dead.—If you thirst—
Hunger—go naked—suffer anything,
You may for them! There's help in a live mouse

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More than a dead man! And what else art thou?
Accused of that, the man that doeth which
The law condemns to die. Escape the law—
And then talk of thy Marian.
Rob. No more;
Thou madden'st me!
Nor. I tell thee what thou know'st
Must be! and, sooth to say, though a rough man,
I have no desire to see thee die the death!
Who meets it bravest, but puts on a mask
Which only proves the agony 'twould hide,
When at the hangman's touch, the sweat-drop starts
On the bold brow, so seeming calm; and the blood
Flies to the heart, and leaves the valiant cheek,
That would be thought to smile, without a drop
To vouch for it!
Rob. Thou harrow'st me, good Norris.
Nor. Yet what I tell, thou know'st! What must
it be
When a reprieve at the last point has kill'd.
I knew a man who narrowly escaped.
To think of what he told me, even now
Makes me breathe thick, and from my crown to my sole
Sets my flesh tingling; and all o'er my skin
Spreads the chill, clammy, heavy dew of death!
What at the sight of the huge, living mass
Of human faces all upturn'd, he felt
As doth a living man, suppose he lay
Beside a corpse; for such, he said, he seem'd
To be unto himself. How he did freeze,
At the heat of the sun, with the thought of the grave!
How life
Did stare on him from everything around him!
Fields, houses, walls, stones—yea, the grisly frame
He stood on, his last footing-place in the world!
And he alone a spectacle of death!
The process then——
Rob. Leave off!—I choke!—I fly!—
The door is fast!
Nor. Thy fear hath shot the bolt!—
You see 'tis open!

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Rob. [*taking his handkerchief from his neck.*] Give
my Marian this,
And be a friend to her.
Nor. I will.
Rob. My child!
Nor. Soon as the seas are cross'd, what hinders her
Take ship, and follow thee?
Rob. Thou'lt see to that?
Nor. I will.
Rob. My blessing on thee, Norris!
Nor. Nay!——
Rob. Thou'rt the preserver of my life—and all
That makes it life to me! As thou to me
Art good, may Heaven prove good to thee! Thy face
Why dost thou turn away?
Nor. I do not like
That any see me weep.—I had as lief
Be hang'd as thank'd. My watch is nearly spent:
The quarter of an hour, and 'tis the span
In which thy coil of life doth lie. Make haste!
Why dost thou stand bewilder'd thus? Look, Robert!
There is the door!—A minute more 'tis lock'd!
Choose on which side on't thou wilt then be found.
Rob. I take thy proffer—Norris!
Nor. If thou breathest
Another word of thanks!——
Rob. I won't!—You'll not
Forget my child?—You'll be a father to her?
Swear thou wilt be a father to my child!
Nor. You note my hand is on the key.
Rob. Don't turn it!
I am gone!—I fly!—My Marian!—My Marian!
[*Rushes out.*
Nor. My Marian!—An open window. Ay!
Now a fast door. Who's there?
Wolf. [*outside.*] 'Tis I.
Nor. What, Wolf?

Enter WOLF.

Come in! He's off!—he's fled!—Art sorry, man?
I'm not much prone to pity; yet had as lief
A man that's innocent should escape as die.

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Wolf. That's innocent!
Nor. Thou fool! Hast known me still
Thy master in all kinds of craftiness,
Could buy and sell thee, and believest thou yet
He murder'd him?
Wolf. Who did it then?
Nor. By my troth
Thou hast no stomach for a deed of blood!
Thy own seems spill'd at only thought of one!
'Sdeath! Is't a frost, man, that thy cheek's so white,
And thou dost shiver so? "Who did it then?"
No one! There's fire to warm thee! Be thyself!
Wolf. The knife was taken from his breast.
Nor. It was!—
What ails thy teeth to make them chatter so?
Want'st meat, or drink, or sleep, or what? "The knife
Was taken from his breast!" What then? The knife
Found nothing there it could not find within
A six weeks' buried corpse! Furies and death!
Believest me not—or takest me for a ghost,
That thou dost gaze me thus with mouth agape?
Listen! Whilst he was gone to fetch his gear,
Lay further down the beach, did I come up,
Find the wreck'd seaman, dead—I tell thee dead!
'Sdeath! won't believe me still? Searching for something
Would leave a mark might serve as evidence
That violence had been done—my hand by chance
Lit on his knife, he had dropp'd—on Robert's knife!—
When didst thou get the ague? What a fit!—
I say by chance I lit on Robert's knife,
For which this hand of mine—not Robert's, as
Thou thought'st—Thou dog-fish! How I laugh at thee!—
Did find the sheath wherein thou saw'st it sticking.
Why thou wilt shake thee out of joint; what heeds
A dead man's breast a knife, more than a pincushion
A pin!
Wolf. [*stammering.*] The body!
Nor. What of it?
Is it tied to thee? Art in the death grip of

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The drowned man? I would not think thee, Wolf,
A chicken heart, yet never saw I man
That look'd more like a coward! Couldst thou see
Thyself and look at me! What of the body?
Did it rise up, and walk, or run, or caper,
Or offer thee a hand to shake, or talk,
Or troll a song to thee? What did the body
To make thee marvel like a man demented?
Tell me, that I may play the madman too!
Wolf. Pray Heaven thou go'st not mad in earnest!
Nor. Man!
Wolf!—Have a care—don't take me for a child
Because thyself art one! Thou wouldst not say
That life was in the body? It was warm
About the heart! [*Aside.*] Sit down, good Wolf,
Recover thee a little. Tell thy tale [sit down,
Thy own way. For I see there's something—come—
Go on—the body?
Wolf. I return'd to it
When thou and all the rest were gone, to search
If treasure were about it. It was bleeding!
I thought it strange, for not a drop did follow
When first they drew the knife out; and I fancied
Life must be in it still—and so it was!
I felt the heart beat slow and dull—mine own
Methought would stop!
Nor. Kept the blood flowing still?
Wolf. It did—more free; and as it flow'd, the heart
More full and quick did beat.
Nor. It had been wrong
To stop the blood.
Wolf. I didn't!—I did mind
Nothing but the heart, which now beat stronger still,
Until methought the chest began to heave,
And so it did! And presently I heard
A gurgling in the throat of the shipwreck'd man,
And I began to freeze, expecting now
To hear the body speak.
Nor. Did it?
Wolf. Almost!
A sound between a murmur and a moan.

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Nor. Was it repeated?
Wolf. Yes; but very faint.
Nor. Any more?
Wolf. Yes; fainter though at every time;
And now the heart beat faint, and presently
Came a slight shivering o'er the body—then
A sigh—and nothing more—the soul had fled!
Nor. I thought 'twas over warm about the heart!
Wolf. O, Norris, say it not!
Nor. What did I say?
Wolf. You thought 'twas over warm about the heart.
Nor. Well!—Of what value is a spark of life,
More than a spark of any other thing?
Wolf. The body was thy father's!
Nor. Devil!—Imp
Of Hell! Unsay it, or thou diest, with
A lie in thy throat!
Wolf. Were it my last breath, Norris,
I speak the truth!
Nor. Who else has heard it from thee?
Wolf. No one!
Nor. I am mad!—No wonder if I am!
Wretch, hadst thou stopp'd the old man's blood—
Wolf. He had lived!
I thought thy interest 'twas, that he should die.
I knew not then it was thy father.
Nor. Devil!
Why had I anything to say to thee!
And where's the body now?
Wolf. I left it where
I found it.
Nor. Fool!—Thou should'st have carried it
To the cliff, and cast it straight into the sea
Where ne'er the sand is dry.
Wolf. Would not the sea
Have thrown it up again?
Nor. The sea?—The earth,
Though it were buried in't ten fathom deep,
Would throw it up again!—Nothing can make
A grave that's deep enough to keep it!—Cast

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A mountain on't 'twould heave it off!—They'll know it
When it is brought before the coroner!
Wolf. I have taken care of that.
Nor. Mangled the features?
Wolf. Yes!
Nor. Savage!—
Wolf. For thy sake I did it!
Nor. True!
Right!—You did very right—and after all
What was it but a piece of clay?—Now, Wolf,
Where would'st thou be?
Wolf. Why, anywhere but here!
Nor. Wilt cross the sea?—Thou hadst a hand, thou knowest,
In the murder—Thou didst finish it—Thou let'st
The old man die—He were not murder'd else—
Wilt cross the sea?—I'll give thee gold enough
To pay thy passage wheresoe'er thou'lt go,
And set thee down there as a man,—and more,
If more thou want'st—Wilt cross the sea?
Wolf. I will.
Nor. When wilt thou start?—To-morrow?
Wolf. Yes.
Nor. At dawn?
Wolf. At dawn!—
Nor. That's good!—That's excellent!—I'm much
Beholden to thee, Wolf—Thou'rt a true friend—
Go far—Go very far!—The more apart
The better! Stop not at a thousand miles—
Or two—or three!—Look, Wolf! I have a jar
Buried in the garden, full of treasure—Take it,
And luck go with you!—You will start to-morrow?
At dawn?—Take passage to a distant land,
Will you not?—Thank you! Thank you, Wolf! I'll ne'er
Forget you!—never cease to be your friend!

[*They go out.*

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SCENE II.—*The inside of Robert's Cottage.*

Enter MARIAN.

Mari. My father's house! O would it were indeed
My father's house, as I did know it once.
I were content to be a wrecker's child!
But now I have a feeling as all things
Did loathe me!—E'en the threshold which from child-
hood
I have been used to pass!—I enter'd it
With doubt, as though I cross'd it 'gainst its will;
The very bed I've slept in every night
For eighteen years, did seem to say to me,
"Lie on the floor!"—And when in agony
I threw myself upon the floor, I shrank,
As that did spurn me too, and cry to me,
"Thou art the daughter of a murderer!"—
Me, that when household use required the life
Of a poor brainless bird, would run a mile
To get some other hand to take it, nor
Could even then look on! But where is nature?
She has been scared away, but now returns.
Oh my poor father!—Oh my luckless father!
My hapless, guilty father!—Will the day
Never more break?—I only wait for it
To seek for him, and comfort him, and tell him
That I am still his child—his Marian!

Rob. [*Rushing in.*] My Marian!—What! Hold'st
thou back from me?

Mari. No!

Rob. But thou dost!

Mari. No!—No!—See there—I have thrown
My arms around thy neck!

Rob. Yes!—but you turn
Your head away!

Mari. Is't turn'd away now?

Rob. No!
But where's the kiss, you never met me but
You printed on my cheek?—

Mari. There!

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Rob. Humph!—I fear
I have thrown away both time and risk—I came
To seek my daughter—but she is not here—
She has gone from me!—deserted me!—I have lost her!
Mari. No!—No!—
Rob. You know her?—fetch me her!—make haste!
Mari. She's here!
Rob. She's not!—she's anywhere but here!
And I am here at peril of my life
To see her for a minute ere I go
Perhaps for ever from her.
Mari. Oh, my father!
I am indeed thy child!—Thy Marian!
Rob. These tears are something like her—I begin
To think that thou'rt my child—Thou art my child!
Thou hast heard it?
Mari. Yes!
Rob. What ponderous thing is "Yes,"
To take a sigh like that to heave it off?
Mari. Thou art in danger.
Rob. Great!—To-morrow, may be,
A dungeon! there, most certainly the dock!—
There, in all likelihood, the gibbet! but
I have a chance—that chance is now!—'Tis little!
And, every moment that I lose, grows less!
But I'm content it should go all!—ay, all!
If I have lost one fraction of my child
That's due to me—go all—and let it go!
Mari. I am all thy own—Thy own hand not thy own
More than thy Marian!—Thou'rt in flight!—We'll fly
Together!
Rob. [*Re-assured.*] No, but thou shalt follow me,
And speedily!—Think kindly of Black Norris!—
He set me free—He'll be a friend to thee—
He furnish'd me with means of flight.
Mari. With means?
[MARIAN *goes out, and returns with a little purse.*
Here, father, here; 'tis little; but a mite
Is a mountain if 'tis wanting when 'tis needed!
Rob. Part of thy little store?
Mari. The rest's at sea:

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Would it were here!—Its absence now is loss
Which, though it come a score times doubled back,
It never can repair!
Rob. And thou, my child?—
Mari. I have hands!—There's Heaven!—Oh father!
Rob. Dost thou think
Thy father guilty?
Mari. I think nothing now,
Except that thou'rt in danger.
Rob. Marian,
I no more did the deed——
Mari. They will be here,
And then thou art lost!
Rob. Thou dost not think me guilty?
Mari. What matter what thy Marian thinks, when death
Pursues thee and thou lingerest here, and not
One moment am I certain but the next
It may o'ertake thee—here!—in thy own house!
That's now no shelter for thee—here!—before
Thy Marian's eyes that cannot help thee!—Fly!
Thy life perhaps may pay for the next breath
Thou drawest here!—The thought distracts me!—Fly!
Rob. It cannot be thou think'st me guilty?
Mari. Fly!
Terror doth take away my senses—Fly!
Rob. I do begin to doubt thou think'st me guilty?
Mari. Oh father, fly!
Rob. I am innocent!
Mari. 'Tis well!
Rob. It is not well—I am innocent! I'll swear it!
Mari. Thou need'st not, father—Don't!—Fly!—Fly!—
Rob. By—
Mari. Stop!
Rob. Thou think'st me guilty!—Spare thy kindness—There
Perish thy coin! I will not use it!—Fly!—
Do anything to save my life!—If it goes,
It may go!—Here I'll sit!—E'en here!—Ay here!—
Here in the cottage thou wast born in, nursed,

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Brought up in—till now thou'rt eighteen years, and now
Dost tell thy father he's a murderer!
Here I'll wait for them—Let them come and take me!
Take me before thine eyes!—Imprison me!
Try me, and hang me! I'll not turn my hand
To save my life! since my own child that knows me
Believes me guilty. I am guilty!—Yes!
Let all the world beside believe me so.

Amb. [*Without.*] What hoa!

Rob. They come!

Mari. Fly by the other door!

Rob. You hear! It is beset.

Mari. Hide somewhere!

Rob. Where?

They'll search the house!—Were there a hundred doors
And all were free—were there a cavern, where
No foot could follow me—I would sit here
And let them take me!

Amb. Robert!

Rob. [*opens the door.*] Here!—Come in!

Mari. For mercy's sake!—

Rob. For no sake!—Here I am:
Take me!

Mari. My father!

Rob. I am guilty!

Mari. Nay!—

Rob. She says I am—take me away!

Mari. O! stay!

Don't take him yet!—Good friends!—you are neighbours!—don't!
Don't take away my father!—leave him with me!—
Pray—pray don't take him!

Rob. I am guilty—take me!
I am guilty!—Ask my child—my Marian!

Mari. Don't!—Don't!—Stay! Mercy! Mercy!
—O my father! [*They go out.*

END OF ACT III.

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ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Waiting Room.*

Enter AMBROSE *and* PHILIP.

Amb. He is committed, and I pity him!
To be condemned upon the evidence
Of his own daughter! 'Tis unnatural
To take away the life that gave us life!
This comes of learning!—Had it been a child
Of yours, or mine, what heed would she have taken
Of a false oath, to save a father's life?
Her mother was a sort of lady—ay,
The daughter of a broken gentleman,
Took up his quarters in the cottage, while
Old Robert's father lived. They fell in love,
And at the father's death, they married.
Phil. So
Did come her lady breeding.
Amb. Even so.
She, as her mother did before, it seems
Doth quarrel with the freedom that we take
With dead men's gear; and to the beach must needs
Follow her father—She had better far
Have sought her death, for what a curse must now
Her life be to her! Was't not strange she fainted
Soon as her evidence was done, and yet
Could give that evidence!
Phil. Here comes old Robert.

Enter ROBERT *between two constables, followed by men and women.*—NORRIS *in the back-ground.*

Rob. I am innocent! I am murder'd! My own child
Has sworn my life away! My Marian!
Falsely—most falsely!—When they try me, 'tis
By her I die; not by the judge—the jury,
Or any one but her! She gives the verdict!—
Passes the sentence!—puts my limbs in irons!—

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Casts me into my dungeon!—drags me thence
To the scaffold!—is my executioner!—
Does all that puts her father in his grave
Before his time!—Her father, good to her,
Whate'er he was to others—Oh! to have died
By any evidence but mine own child's!
Take me to prison.
First Constable. No, we are waiting for
The order of committal.
Mari. [*Rushing in.*] O my father!
Rob. Thy father?—Am I so?—I prithee, girl,
Call me that name again! It is a thing
Too good to be believed!
Mari. What, father?
Rob. What?
Why, to be father to so good a child!
Mari. So good a child?
Rob. So good a child! I say it
Again!—So good a child!—Come, look at me!
Give me thy hand!—the other one, and look
Full in my face!—And fix thine eyes on mine!—
As I do live, thou canst!—And yet canst lie
To call me father!—Thou'rt no child of mine!
[*Casts her from him, she falls on her knees.*
Mari. My father!
Rob. Up! or I will trample on thee!
Fasten my hands in thy dark silken hair,
And lift thee up by it, and fling thee from me!
Who gave thee those fine locks?
Mari. Thou! Thou!
Rob. Who gave thee
Those hands thou clasp'st to me?
Mari. Thou!
Rob. I!—Indeed!
And the rest of thy limbs?—Thy body? and the tongue
Thou speak'st with—Owest thou everything to me?
Mari. I do!—indeed I do!
Rob. Indeed! Indeed!
Thou liest! Thou wert never child of mine!
No!—No!—I never carried thee up and down
The beach in my arms, many and many a day,

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To strengthen thee, when thou wast sickly !—No !
I never brought thee from the market town,
Whene'er I went to it, a pocket-load
Of children's gear !—No !—No, I never was
Your play-fellow that ne'er fell out with you
Whate'er you did to him !—No !—Never ! Nor
When fever came into the village, and
Fix'd its fell gripe on you, I never watch'd
Ten days and nights running, beside your bed,
Living I know not how, for sleep I took not,
And hardly food ! And since your mother died——
Mari. Thou'lt kill me, father !
Rob. Since your mother died
I have not been a mother and a father
Both—both to thee !
Mari. Oh ! spare me !
Rob. I was never
Anything to thee !—Call me father !—why
A father's life is wrapp'd up in his child !
Was mine wrapp'd up in thee ?—Thou know'st 'twas not !—
How durst thou call me father ?—fasten upon me !—
That never gave thee proof, sign, anything
Of recognition that thou wast my child !
Strain'd thee to my heart by the hour !—parting thy hair
And smoothing it, and calling thee all things
That fondness idolising thinks upon
To speak its yearning love !—core of my heart !
Drop of my heart's blood, was worth all the rest !
Apple of mine eye, for which I'd give mine eyes,
Orbs, sockets, lids, and all !—till words grew sobs,
And love, o'er-fraught, put what it loved away
To get relief from tears !—Never did I
Do this to thee !—why call me father, then,
That art no child of mine ?
Mari. I am thy child !
The child to whom thou didst all this and more.
Rob. Thou stood'st not then, just now, in the witness-box,
Before the justice in that justice-room,
And sworest my life away.

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Mari. Where thou dost say,
I stood!—What thou dost say, I did!—and yet,
Not in those hours thou namest of fond endearment,
Felt, as I felt it then, thou wast my father!
Rob. Well!—Justify it—prove thee in the right—
Make it a lawful thing—a natural thing—
The act of a child!—a good child—a true child!
An only one!—one parent in the grave,
The other left—that other, a fond father—
A fond, old, doting, idolising father!
Approve it such an act in such a child
To slay that father! Come!
Mari. An oath!—an oath!
Rob. Thy father's life!
Mari. Thy daughter's soul!
Rob. 'Twere well
Thy lip had then a little of the thing
The heart had over much of!
Mari. What?
Rob. Stone!—Rock!
They never should have opened!
Mari. Silence had
Condemned thee equally.
Rob. But not the breath
Mine own life gave!
Mari. I felt in the justice-room
As if the final judgment-day were come,
And not a hiding-place my heart could find
To screen a thought or wish; but every one
Stood naked 'fore the judge, as now my face
Stands before you! All things did vanish, father!
That make the interest and substance up
Of human life—which, from the mighty thing
That once was all in all, was shrunk to nothing,
As by some high command my soul received,
And could not but obey, it did cast off
All earthly ties, which, with their causes, melted
Away!—And I saw nothing but the Eye,
That seeth all, bent searchingly on mine,
And my lips oped as not of their own will
But of a stronger—I saw nothing then

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But that all-seeing Eye—but now I see
Nothing but my father!
[*She rushes towards him, and throws her arms round his neck.*
Rob. Hold off!—thou adder!
Sting me, and think to coil about me still
With thy loathsome folds! Think I will suffer thee!
Not grasp thee!—pluck thee from me!—dash thee to
The earth!
Mari. O! no!
Rob. Unloose thy coil!—my flesh
Creeps at thee! Hear'st thou? Come—let go thy hold,
Or I will do some violence to thee!
Mari. Do!
Rob. Strike thee!
Mari. Do!—Dead!—Dead!—'twere merciful.
Rob. No; suffer thee to live, that thou may'st see
My execution.
Mari. O! is it thy child
Thou speakest to?
Rob. Let go, or I will curse thee!
Mari. Do! so thou sufferest me to cling to thee
O! can you think I swore it with my will!
That I—thy child—thy Marian—all my life
Good to thee—was I not?—and loving to thee!
Dost not believe I love thee?—What!—that I
Who'd suffer torture—death—ten thousand deaths,
To save thy life—would swear thy life away
Willingly? willingly?—oh! in my heavy strait,
To be an instrument of justice 'gainst thee,
That makes me wish—and I do wish it—thou
Hadst never given me being!—bear not thus
Unsufferably hard upon thy child!—
Thy child as ever! Whatsoe'er she did!
Whatsoe'er thou hast done!—That loves thee—dotes
Upon thee! honours!—idolises thee,
As e'er did child her father!
Rob. Let me go!
Or as I'm here—and am a murder'd man—
Murder'd by thee;—I'll curse thee —let me go!—

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Third Bailiff *enters with a paper, which he gives to the First Bailiff.*

Third Bailiff. The order of committal!
Mari. [*to* Bailiff.] Stop!—a minute!
Rob. Or loose thy hold, or bide my curse!
Mari. My mother!
That is in her grave—who gave me to thee—gave me,
When she had bless'd me on her death-bed, saying
"Be mother, now, and father to our child!"—
For her sake, father! Am I not by her
Enough an orphan!—would I, think you, would I
Be more an orphan than I am?
Rob. Away!
Mari. Both—both my parents lose?
Rob. May—
Mari. [*shrieks.*] Don't curse me—but I cannot let thee go!— [*They go out.*
Norris. [*coming forward.*] Hold on, old Robert!
That's the mood! Hold on!
Rail at her! Spurn her! Curse her! Drive her mad!
The more she's fit for me. Use thy own flesh
Like carrion! Foot it from thee! Loathe it! I'm
The bird will banquet on't!—a father's blood
Must not be shed—although unwittingly—
For nothing!—That's the price which I have paid
For her dark hair, white skin, and shapely limbs;
Her lady face and fairly rounded form!
And I will have them—nor do prize them less
Because her heart would give them to another!
In that's the feast of hate, to taste the joy
That's purchased at the cost of those we hate!
When I confess I put the trick upon him
He is free! My motive—love for his fair child
Absolves me.—Then the flight I had prepared—
And his own rashness marr'd—is proof enough;
His absence was my aim, and not his death!
They will but chide me, and, at worst, will say
"The scheme was daring!—Yet, a lover's one!"
Between her father's life—my rival's hopes—
She will not pause to choose, but vindicate

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At once a daughter's duty, and her love,
And so be mine.

Enter STEPHEN.

Whither so fast, good Stephen ?—
Ste. Where is my master ?
Nor. Fast in prison !
Ste. Where
His daughter ?
Nor. Thou hast news,—and it is bad !
Ste. It is !—Young Edward's ship is cast away
Upon the coast of France, and all the crew,
'Tis said, have perish'd !
Nor. Know'st thou what thou sayst ?
Ste. As thou that hear'st me say it !
Nor. All the crew ?
Ste. All !
Nor. And thou art in search of Marian
To tell her this ?
Ste. I am !
Nor. I'll bring thee to her.
How I do wonder at the news, I know—
Which I myself have spread ! I'll bring thee to her.
[*They go out.*

SCENE II.—*The Outside of a Prison.*

MARIAN, *before the Gate, half-reclining on the ground.*

Mari. Here is my death-bed. Here I'll stretch myself
And yield my spirit up, for I do feel
I am about to die. I could have borne
The shame of the misdeed that was not mine—
Submitted to it, as the will of Heaven,
Incurring which I had not broke its will—
But that the tie of nature should have snapp'd
Along with that of reverence for Heaven—
That where I found all love—all safeguard once—
I find all loathing—all desertion now,
That is too hard to bear ! No kind of shame

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That ever made the cheek to redden, while
The heart was free, had made me shrink from him—
Mocks, scorns, repulses, nor annoyances—
I would have cleaved to him amid the lightnings
Of blasting looks; and voices, thundering scorns!
Shared the dark penance of his dungeon with him!
Walk'd with him to the place of execution!
Mounted it step by step along with him!
And, all around him lowering, shone upon him,
Till his last look, with reverence and love!
They shall not shut me from his prison!—have
No right! I am his child! They should not heed
His anger 'gainst me which they do not share,
But I do bear it all! Nor care how high
The surf doth run! It cannot wax so fierce
But I will cleave it, rather than remain
Upon this desolate and dreary shore!
Within! within!—Who keeps the gate?

Enter Jailor.

Jailor. What want you?

Mari. Admittance to my father!

Jailor. 'Tis forbid!

Mari. Open the door a little—do, good sir,
And let me speak with you—give me but a chink,
I'll pass through it!

[Jailor *opens the gate, she tries to pass it, but is prevented. They advance struggling.*

Jailor. What mean you? Are you mad?

Mari. I am! The fury all, without the trance
That makes it bearable! The horror of
The dream, without the sleep! Do you know aught
About the ties of nature? Have you look'd
Upon a living father, mother, brother,
Or sister—or upon a living child
That was your own? I have a living father,
And he's within that prison—and I'm here
His living child, and yearn to go to him!
And you say I cannot! Can you say it? Will you?
Do you? You do not! Cannot! Will not! Oh,
Admit me to my father!

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Jailor. What's the use?
He'll only drive thee from him!
Mari. Let me in!
I'll find the use. Oh! do you think his heart
Could turn to stone in a moment! Harden so
To the very core, and 'gainst his only child?
Admit me and you'll see it still is flesh;
All flesh—all beating flesh, and at the core,
Its inmost—tenderest—warmest part—his child!
Jailor. Poor girl!
Mari. You pity me!—Oh! show me pity then—
The act of pity—without which, with all
Its melting looks and tones, its sighs and tears,
'Tis useless as a very beggar, who
Gives all things but the needed thing—relief!
You say "Poor girl!"—and you say true! To be
An orphan!—to be friendless!—shelterless!
To go in rags, and they in tatters! Hang
From morn till morn—from week's end unto week's end,
'Twixt sustenance and starvation!—All of these
Together but a little sprinkling make
Of suffering, to the torrent hurl'd on me!
I can't stand under it much longer—now!
My reason totters!—reels! Another moment
I'm a lunatic—O save me from the jacket,
The straw—the whip—the chain—open the door!
Admit me to my father!
Jailor. It is hard
To have no option but the act of duty,
When the heart bleeds, and that decides against it.
Poor girl! Though I consort with stone and iron,
My heart partakes not so of their condition
That I can see and hear thee with such eyes
And ears, as walls and bars do turn to misery!
Thou must endure—and Heaven support thee under it!
All are denied admittance to his cell,
And thou, I grieve to say it, first of all! [*Going.*
Mari. [*stopping him.*] Stay! Let me stop at the door of his cell!—at the end
Of the passage that leads to it!—in the court on which
The passage opens!—on the stairs!—anywhere

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Within the prison! so that I may be
Under one roof with him! Let me stop with you
At the gate!
Jailor. It may not be.
Mari. Show me the window of
His cell!—Is it that—or that—which is it?
Jailor. Neither.
Mari. Is it that then?
Jailor. 'Tis not in this quarter of
The prison.
Mari. Which quarter then?
Jailor. I may not tell thee.
Don't stop me, girl! I can't stay longer with thee!
Thou quite unman'st me!
Mari. Leave the door ajar—
A moment! Let me look into the prison!
[*He shuts the door.*
Go!—thou dost weep! And think'st thou I'll believe it?
Thou art no better than the grating bolt
That at thy will is shot and holds the door!
I am helpless—hopeless!—Would I were the bolt
Door—walls—bars—anything but what I am!
And I have put him there!—and if he dies,
I hang him! Who are these that look at me,
As they would strike me dead? I couldn't help it!
My mother train'd me in the fear of God!
I was forced to do it! Just as well might ye blame
A rock to split, when riven by the lightning,
As my lips to part, when in the name of Heaven
The justice bade them ope and speak the truth!
I am innocent!—don't spurn me—I am innocent!
[*Retreats to the wall, and supports herself against it.*

Enter NORRIS *and* STEPHEN.

Nor. There!—up to her—accost her—tell your news!
What! is it loathing that I feel for her,
Not love? It pleasures me to see her thus.
Except for her I had not done it! That
Is rankling at my heart—sets it in storm!
I'm all for havoc! He should die—But then
It were another murder on my soul!

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Ste. Marian!
Mari. Well, Stephen! What of misery more?
For sure it is your errand, by your looks!
Tell me! You can add nothing to the cup
Already that o'erflows! Is it of Edward?
Is he dead?
Ste. He is! Drown'd on the coast of France.
Mari. I hear it—and I do not shed a tear!
Nor feel the want to weep! I welcome it!
'Tis good news! He has left a world of woe
To him—to him—for what is woe to me
Were woe to him! Would I a heart I love,
As I love his, should feel what mine doth feel?
Would I put adders where I could not bear
To have an insect sting? 'Tis well he's dead!
The friends he leaves, should put on holiday,
Not mourning clothes for him! His passing bell
Should ring a peal, and not a knell! 'Tis best
It is as it is. His welcome home had been
"Heaven help you!"—not "Heaven bless you!"—
Well, he's dead!
How was he drowned?
Ste. His ship, they say, went down
With all the crew.
Mari. With all the crew! He lies
In a watery grave! How fresh he look'd the day
He went! What hope was in his eye, whose fire
You would have thought would ne'er go out! He seem'd
In speed to meet good fortune, as a friend
Already come in sight!—I see him now
Stepping with gallant air into the boat,
And looking at the sea, as 'twere a thing
Stable as the solid earth!—My sailor lad!
Young, comely, manly, good, and fond of me!
I little thought the look would be my last
Which promised I should see thee soon again.
Thou diest in good time—'tis years of woes
Saved by a minute's pang! I thought just now
I was past weeping! I did love him!—love him
With all my will!—No portion of my heart

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But what was given to him—no portion on't
I ever wish'd were back !
Nor. Now is my time !
Marian !
Mari. What ! more ?—Is there more misery ?
There's nothing left but death—I do not count
Death misery !
Nor. I come to talk to thee
Of life, not death !
Mari. Where is it ?—show it me !
Life is the opposite of death—a thing
To be preferr'd to it !—show me that life !—
For if thou mean'st such life as now I see
I had rather die than live !
Nor. I love thee, Marian !
Mari. Does any one love Marian ?
Nor. I repeat
I love thee, Marian, wilt thou marry me ?
Mari. Marry thee ?—Yes ; when they put on for me
My wedding clothes—my shroud !—and lay me in
My bridal bed—my grave !—Then I'll be wife
To thee or any one !
Nor. What would'st thou do
To save thy father's life ?
Mari. Anything !
Nor. What
To have it proved that he is innocent ?
Mari. Anything !—pay the felon's penalty
Myself !—Abide the gibbet !—Marry thee
Now—now !—If now thou didst heave off for me
That mountain on my heart—my father's plight !
That, heavier on my soul—my father's sin !
This didst thou do—and stood my lover there,
Of whom to say that in his grave he's dearer
Than he was ever when in life to me,
Is to say truth—I'd give to thee my hand !
Nor. I take it !—
What ! draw'st thou back ?
Mari. 'Tis but to pause a moment !
No !—I'll see nothing but my father !—Think
There's no one else in the world !—I'll see but him

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And the plight he lies in !—deeper—lonelier
Than shipman at the bottom of the sea !
Canst thou do this thou sayest ?
Nor. Yes !
Mari. Thou'lt save
My father's life ? Thou'lt prove him innocent ?
Nor. I will !
Mari. The day thou dost it, I am thine !
Nor. Give me thy hand upon it !—Draw'st thou back
Again !
Mari. No !—There !—One moment !—Edward !—
There ! [*Faints in his arms.*

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Shore.*

Enter NORRIS.

It is a miracle how things, that seem
The most perverse, do work unto mine ends !
Entanglement doth set me free as fast
As it doth catch me ! His committal, which
I thought had marr'd me, makes me ! He is free !
Hard swearing ope'd at last his dungeon door.
They threaten'd me with his place, but I escaped
With chiding, and fair Marian is mine,
And this the day I go with her to church !
I would it were to any other place !
I dream'd of her last night. I thought it was
Our wedding day, and, to the church door, I
Was leading her. 'Twas shut ! I knock'd at it.
One answer'd from within, "I must not enter !"
And I did shudder, for I knew the voice.
And yet again I knock'd. When ope'd the door,
And, fear congealing sight ! a spectre glared

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Upon me! 'Twas my father! It did say,
"It is forbid—thou must not enter here!"
I woke. It was the first night I had slept,
To call it sleep, since that unlucky night.
Oh! may I never sleep such sleep again! [*Goes out.*

SCENE II.—*Robert's Cottage.*

Enter ROBERT.

Rob. Better I had died! My child has given her life
To cherish mine! E'en while I look at her
She wastes away!—and what doth aggravate
The pang to see her fall a prey to death
So fast, is the sweet uncomplaining patience
With which she bears the tooth that's gnawing her,
Working its way into the quick! She looks
On me the cause of the inextricable,
Unsufferable strait she has fallen into,
As one to pity rather than to blame!
This is her wedding-day!—far better call'd
Her funeral day! I have left no means untried
To tempt him to forego his claim—he cries
"I've paid the price, and what I've bought I'll take!"
While prayers awaken wrath, and not remorse,
And his eye lowers till I think I see
His heart, with evil at the very core.
The hour!—I must awaken her. Her eyes
Were closed when last I look'd!—before the time
I would not have them open on the day
They'll see at last too soon!—She has waked of herself!
Is up, and dress'd, and smiling, with a cheek
More kin to death than life!—My Marian!

Marian (*having entered*). My father!—what's the matter that you turn
Your eyes away? You falter when you speak!
Father! be cheerful—happy—look upon me!

Rob. My girl, don't smile!

Mari. What my face does, my father,
My heart does!—It is calm!—Yea, cheerful!—not

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That it lacks cause for grief—but has more cause
For gladness! I have done what Heaven approves—
My duty!—sacrificed a little thing—
Much in itself, but in comparison
Little—to gain a great thing—to preserve
My father's life!—I should smile!—Let me smile,
And smile along with me!

Rob. My child—my child—
That talk'd to me like an angel!—clung to me!
Knelt to me to persuade me to forbear!
And like a fiend I would not heed, but did
The evil thing, whence all this ruin grew!
My child, who loving me, as she truly said,
And since has proved, beyond her life—did keep
Her reverence for Heaven, when lacking that
She might have saved me!—My poor child, that I
For doing so her duty, as she ought,
Did spurn—did use with violence—did suffer
To trail along the street, hanging to me!—
Whom I was nigh to curse!—I did not, Marian!
Indeed I did not curse thee!—A child so used!—
To blast her happiness—life—everything
For me—and do it with a smile!

Mari. My father!
No more of this, beseech thee—these are thoughts
That cannot profit us! and they awaken
Others, 'twere better for our peace we suffer
To sleep!—for they do madden!—Give me thy hand!
Don't speak!—My brain did reel just now!—
'Tis over!—I'll go to the door and see
If he be coming.

Rob. Who?

Mari. The bridegroom!
Since we're to marry, as well marry now
As any other time—— O save me!—Hide me!—

[*Rushing to her father, hides her face in his breast.*

Enter EDWARD.

Edw. My Marian! my girl! my love! my bride!
And is thy joy to see me back so great
It overcomes thee?—Marian, from the hour

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We hoisted sail to bring me back to thee,
The wind has never veer'd nor flagg'd—We've had
A merry run of good twelve knots an hour!—
Nothing—sheet, halyard—but the helm to 'tend to,
As though the vessel with my heart did race,
That still did keep before it!—Turn to me!—
Look at me!—Speak to me!—The face and voice,
I have heard and seen a thousand miles away—
Now that I'm near to thee—within reach of thee—
Touching thee, Marian!—let me see and hear!
Has she not power to speak or move?
Rob. My boy,—
The sight of thee so sudden is too much for her.
Edw. And does she love me better?—Marian!—
Sweet—constant—fond—could I believe so fond?—
'Twas never thus with thee before at meeting!
Unloose the hands that clasp thy father's neck—
Or let me do it for thee—till I fold thee
To my fond, faithful, my adoring heart,
That yearns to have thee near it!—Marian!
Know'st thou not Edward's hand?—Does she resist me?
Is it not joy that works upon her so?
Does my return give pain?—Is it a thing
Unwelcome?—Am I loved no longer by her?
Am I forgotten?—
Mari. Edward—no!—no!—no!
Thou'rt not forgotten.
Edw. No?—nor loved no longer?
Mari. Nor loved no longer?—loved more dear than ever!
Than ever, Edward!
Edw. Marian! My love!
My life! the ship is on her course again!
Steady! There's nought ahead!—fool that I was
To fancy there were breakers!—Come, my girl!
Sit on my knee and talk to me! 'tis long
Since we have talk'd together, Marian!
Dost thou hold off?—I have been so long away
You are ashamed to sit upon my knee.
Well! There! What you like I like! Though you've sat

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Often upon my knee. Well! I've made
My luckiest voyage!—our pence have grown to pounds!
Mari. We heard that you were shipwreck'd!
Edw. Ay!
Mari. Were drown'd!
Edw. You took me for my ghost!—no wonder, girl,
You ran away from me! Oh now I see!
We've not touch'd ground we did not wish to touch!—
Nor shipp'd a sea since first we hoisted sail!
And now we marry, Marian!—What's the matter?
How ill you look?—What's this?—You shrink from me!
Has she been ailing, father?—Where are her eyes?—
I left her with a rose upon her cheek,
Where is it?—That is not the form I clasp'd
A month ago!—What's fallen? Something! Ay!
Something! What is it?—both are silent!—Then
Something I know has fallen! To look at you
Is enough—enough!—'twill drive me mad!—I am mad!
Tell me the truth!—Nay then I'll seek for it
Where I'm more like to find it.
Mari. Stop! Come back!—
No!—Stay!—Forgive me, Edward!
[*Falling on her knees.*
Edw. Marian!
Forgive thee!—Why? For what?
Mari. Don't ask! To sea!
On shipboard, and set sail, whate'er the wind,—
Anything, Edward, but the shore!—To sea!—
Rocks, breakers, sands, are nothing!—all the perils
Of leaks, dismasting, canvas blown to threads,
Are nothing!—Foundering!—the dismal'st plight,
That ever bark was in, are nothing!—Yea
Drowning, with thoughts of going deeper down
Than ever plummet sounded, or of graves
Made of the throats of sea-monsters, that dog
The fated vessel!—Leap into them sooner
Than trust thy feet on land!—To sea!—to sea!
Edw. What mean you?
Mari. I will tell while I can!
Edw. Rise up then, and don't kneel to me!

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Mari. Forgive me!
Edw. For what?
Mari. Ay, that's the thing, you can't forgive me
Until you know for what, and when you know it,
Will you forgive me then?—You will not! Yet
Were it my last breath that I speak with to thee,
I love thee dear as ever!—dearer!—dearer!
I love thee dearer than I ever did!—
Edw. Then where's the harm?
Mari. Where?—everywhere!—The sun
Is pale and cold! there is a haze in the sky,
Chilly and thick, will never clear away!
The earth is wither'd, grass, leaves, flowers and all;
Women and men are changed, all cheer and comfort
Departed from their faces and their tongues,
To me!—for thou that madest all these to me
Art lost!—
Edw. Am I not faithful to thee still?
Mari. Thou art, and I am faithful still to thee!
But!—
Edw. What?
Mari. Oh, father!
Rob. Well thou may'st reproach me!
Mari. No!—no! I don't reproach thee; tell it him—
Stop! he will know it soon enough—he's here!

Enter NORRIS *and others, dressed as for a Wedding.*

Nor. Marian!—What! Edward living!—ay, and here!
Edw. It dawns upon me! Dawns?—'Tis open day!—
A stormy one, the sky all black, the sea
All foam, all things portending shipwreck! shipwreck
Already come! binnacle wash'd away!
Rudder unshipp'd! not a mast standing! nothing
But the hull! the lonesome, melancholy hull!
With mountains breaking over it!—She's changed!
She's false! she's lost! I live, and she is lost!
Nor. Come!
Edw. Will she go to him before my face?
She will!—She does!—Will she go forth with him?
Go forth with him to church, and leave me here?
She's gone!—Come death! Well! I'm ashore again—

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What did I wish for every hour in the day !
Every minute !—Pray for ! dream upon ! live upon !—
More than on food or drink, with hope to get it,
I have got at last !—I am on shore again !
Better be at the bottom of the sea !
What's to be done ?—Can anything be done ?—
My destiny's too hard to bear, and yet
I must bear it !—To be mad ! O to be mad !—
How can my senses stand it ?—What are they made of ?
Why don't they go to pieces ?—Not one plank
Holding by another ! All toss'd here and there
In splinters !—Splinters ! — Come, there's comfort in
The knowledge of the cause that wreck'd the ship.
That I will force from her, and then I'll leave her—
Leave everything !—Leave her, leave everything !
[*Goes out.*

SCENE THE LAST.—*The outside of a Church.*

Enter Clergyman, NORRIS, MARIAN, ROBERT, *and others.*

Clergyman. These nuptials are not things of lucky omen.

Nor. I pay no heed to omens !

Clergyman. Marriage is
A holiday—a day of gladness, though
We drop a tear in't !—Bright looks are its favours !
Lightness of gait, and ease of carriage, are
Its proper dress !—This maid has none of them !

Nor. She weds of her free will.

Clergyman. You are the bridegroom ?

Nor. There stands her father—question him !

Clergyman. Methinks
You look not like a bridegroom ; no, nor speak !
There's sullenness upon your brow and tongue,
Care at the heart's core, if not something worse !
His marriage-day is still the merriest
A lover keeps ; it is his harvest-home,
When blights, and winds, and autumn floods are 'scaped,
And all the venture of his tillage housed,
With song and dance and thankful merry-making.

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'Tis strange! but it is your affair, not mine.
You are her father! Gives the maid her hand
Of her free will?

Rob. She does; against her choice,
She gives her hand, although it breaks her heart.
Your Reverence must have heard, he holds her promise
His price for service render'd unto me,
By which her hand she gives, disjoining it
From her heart, long given to another. Tears,
Entreaties, prayers, all means I have tried, to shake
His stubborn purposes, and to pity bend him—
All thrown away! yet have resolves the strongest
Given way at last; perhaps the hour, the place,
Thy sacred presence, these perhaps may give
A sway to that was powerless before!
Look on me, Norris! I'm a father; see
To what a strait I'm brought, upon my knees
Before thee in the dust! Turn to my child—
Upon her death-bed could she look more white?
More ghastly, more like death? She loves thee not!
To save her father—a father less to her
Than she a child to him—she's in the plight
That brings her hither! If she marries thee
It is not with her heart! Don't take her hand!
Take that, thou takest her life along with it!
Thou lay'st a corpse upon thy bridal bed,
And not a bride! O, spare her! spare my child!
Spare me in her!—thyself! forego thy claim!
Release her from the word she will not break,
Though keeping it her thread of life will snap!
Release her from it!—give a young girl her life!—
Preserve the remnant of an old man's life!
And make thyself, if not a happy man,
At least a man contented with himself;
Who else, must needs become a verier wretch,
Than any that he makes!—

Nor. I am here to wed!—

Clergyman. Stern man, look here!—thine eyes may
serve the place
Of ears, no need of them to learn the cause
Of that poor supplicant! What hast thou heard

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Of misery that e'er came up to that?
Plead tears as strong, as she doth plead without?
Sighs? groans?—all things that serve as tongues to grief?
She looks despair, as never yet was told
By doleful sound! Art thou a man, or what?
What keeps thee rock, when all around thee melt?
Shake! fall to pieces at the spectacle
Which most ought thee to move? Hast thou no touch
Of Earth or Heaven, which all men have beside?
So to contrast with all? Thou livest and breathest—
By Him thou livest and breathest by, I adjure thee
Forego the hand which He forbids thee take!
Nor. I am the bridegroom, there's the bride; she weds
Of her free will; though hearts go not with hands,
No reason why they may not follow them.
I love her—I will have her—and I take her!
Edw. [*Rushing in.*] Angel! I know it all! but know not tongue
Can speak the beauty of so fair a deed!
Self-sacrificed to save thy father's life!
The fairest barque that ever mounted wave,
From duty, run upon the foulest shore!
Art thou a man! [*to* NORRIS.]—O, reverend sir, to proof
Without the church let me his manhood put,
And see if in my frame that fibre lives
So basely weak 'twill yield, till at my feet
His claim upon the maiden he renounce!
It is not reverence to Heaven, to stand
And see it outraged in the thing it loves,
Through reverence to Heaven's servant or Heaven's house!
Norris, come forth!—
Nor. Yes! when I lead, a wife,
Thy Marian from the church.
Edw. She is not mine!—
I do forego the maid, do thou forego
Her hand! If hate for me—loathing to see
The maiden mine—constrains thee to an act

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To which a murder were an innocent deed,
I give her up! Pluck up my hopes, although
Their roots have struck to my heart's core, and cast
Away that they shall never flower again,
But wither, die, and, rot!—O, give her up,
And take whate'er by years of toil I have made!
If that sufficeth not, take me along
To labour for thy gain to my life's end,
To do thy bidding, whatsoe'er it be,
On land or sea—how far soe'er away!
To be thy journeyman will labour through
The four-and-twenty hours, without repose
Or food, and set to work when they are out—
Only give up the maid, her word—her peace—
Her patience—reason—life!

Clergyman. No violence!—Or is her reason gone,
Or she is in a trance!

Mari. 'Tis coming!—

Nor. What?

Clergyman. Peace!

Mari. How it scowls all around! The sea is black
As the sky! From head to head as black as ink!
There comes the wind! You see!—that streak of white
Along the horizon!—it grows larger!—See!—
And larger!—That's the wind! 'tis coming on,
Pacing the waves, and stirring up the spray,
As horses do the dust when they're in speed!
You hear it now!—and now the sea is white
As it was black before!

Rob. Something like this
Occurr'd last night, but I did rouse her, and
Recall her to herself.

Nor. This is no time
For list'ning to a dream!

Clergyman. Speak'st thou again!
I'll cause them put thee from the church by force!
I'll hear the dream out, if it be a dream!
If that her senses are unsettled, you're
Forbid to take her hand!—I charge you, peace!

Mari. It lightens! but—'tis distant!—And it thunders—

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Only you cannot hear it!—for the sea
Doth now begin to roar! You'll hear it, though,
Anon!—'tis coming, listen! Hold your breath—
Don't speak! I heard a gun!—there 'tis
Again! And there's the ship, rounding the head,
Rising and pitching, and no pity takes
The storm upon her; but more furious waxes—
And billow after billow, fore-top high,
Do break upon her!

Clergyman. If I hear thee breathe,
I'll force thee from the church!

Mari. She strikes! She's fast!
And now the waves do with her what they will!
She's gone to pieces!—Pieces!—What is this?
A body wash'd on shore, and Norris there,
Rifling it! Ha! he stops!—he is alarm'd!
He sees that life is in it! What is that
He does? He has unclasp'd a knife! He means
To murder the poor man!—He will!—He does!
Stop! Norris!—'tis thy father!

Nor. Furies! fiends!
What mean you?

Clergyman. Thou dost shake! The blood is gone
Even from thy very lips! while all beside
Look as they look'd before! Thou'rt a bad man!

Nor. What heeds a raving girl?

Mari. Where have I been?—
The church? Oh! I remember!—All is right!—
Here, Norris, take my hand!

[*They approach the altar*—WOLF *rises*—NORRIS *lets go* MARIAN'S *hand, and retreats several paces —the rest pause.*

Nor. Hell! what is here?
Like something from a grave, or from the sea
Cast up untimely and unnaturally;
Or, worse, a prisoner from the evil place,
If such there be, let out to harrow me
Before my time—affright me into madness!

Edw. Speak not! observe!

Nor. Wolf!——Wolf!——It is his eyes—
Features—but not the life that moved in them

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His form without his blood! Is it a thing
That breathes, or only would be thought to breathe?
Wolf! I would rush upon it, but my fears
Are bolts that pin me to the spot! Is it come
To tell upon me? Cause of blame to him
I gave not; he went cramm'd with gold away!
Edw. [*to* Clergyman.] Do you hear? That man
has been a partner with him
In some black deed!
Wolf. I have fled over sea, over land,
To get away from it! It follows me!
I have plunged into riot—I have tried
What solitude would do! It talks to me!
I see it in the dead of night as well
As in the noon of day. 'Tis only here
I have got a respite from it yet! In crowds
I have been alone, with it glaring upon me,
Gnashing its teeth, and yelling in mine ears!
But there's another here doth come between
With mild regards, and placid shining face,
And gentle voice which makes, albeit so soft,
My torturers unheard, crying "Repent!
Confess! Repent! Confess!"
Nor. Confess!
Wolf. I will
Repent, I will confess!—then am I free!
I am a murderer.
Nor. Be thou the fiend—I'll know thee!
[*Rushing up and seizing him.*
Wolf!
Wolf. Norris!—What, has it been following thee?
Nor. Peace!
Wolf. [*Furiously.*] But there is no peace! It howls,
and howls,
No foot is fleet enough to distance it,
To 'scape the horror of its teeth;—the bloodhound,
No stream that you can wade will clear thee from,
That never gives you respite!—except here!
Here is a chance! This is a place methinks
He cannot enter; he has hunted me
Till he has driven me wild, but since I'm here

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His bay methinks begins to die away.
Words have been whispered me, at hearing which
'Twas told me he would slacken in his chase.
"Repent! Confess!" those were the words I heard.
I will!—I do!—I am a murderer.
Nor. Coward, where is my gold?
Wolf. All clotted o'er,
Corroded, crumbled with the old man's blood
Which thou lett'st out, and I did leave to spill—
Nor. Fiend!
Wolf. Do not rave at me! I did not know
It was your father!
Edw. Hear ye?
Nor. Villain!—die!
With a lie in thy throat! [*Stabs* WOLF.
Clergyman. Stop, wretch!
Wolf. Thou hast murdered me!
And but for thee I had not murdered him!
But in my soul's strait on the brink of death
I'll show thee ruth as I do hope to me
That mercy will be shown!—"Repent! Confess!"
I hear not now the hound!—'twill stop with thee
If there be mercy for a parricide! [*Dies.*
Nor. You would not listen to a lunatic!
Clergyman. At least, unhappy! thou'rt a murderer!
Nor. Which of you would not kill a mad dog? Come!
You've no right to hold me! Show me first
Your warrant, without which you cannot take
A man that's free to prison!—Just as well
Hang me without a trial!—Let me breathe!
Give me a moment's pause!—let my arms free!
Oh, could I use them now! The blackest curse
That lips can utter—heart conceive—alight
On all who enter there!—May the roof fall
And bury you alive—may it be in flames!
And every door and window fast upon you!
My blood lie at your doors!—the best among ye
Is worse than I! My blood be on you all!
[*He is dragged out.*
Clergyman. Poor sinner! Grace is broad and free
enough

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Even to cover thee, so mayst thou find—
Pattern of love, and piety, and duty,
Surely in Heaven thou would'st have been rewarded?
But Heaven defers its guerdon for thee there,
To give thee one on earth! Be blest in love!

END OF THE DAUGHTER.

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THE LOVE-CHASE:

A COMEDY.

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DEDICATED

TO

DANIEL GRANT, ESQ.

OF MANCHESTER,

BY HIS ATTACHED AND GRATEFUL SERVANT,

J. S. KNOWLES.

1837.

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CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT THE HAYMARKET, IN 1837.)

Sir William Fondlove,	an old Baronet	MR. STRICKLAND.
Waller	in love with Lydia	MR. ELTON.
Wildrake	a Sportsman	MR. WEBSTER.
Trueworth	a Friend of Sir William	MR. HEMMINGS.
Neville	Friends to Waller	MR. WORRELL.
Humphreys	Friends to Waller	MR. HUTCHINGS.
Lash		MR. ROSS.
Chargewell	a Landlord	MR. EDWARDS.
George	a Waiter	MR. BISHOP.
First Lawyer		MR. RAY.
Widow Green		MRS. GLOVER.
Constance	Daughter to Sir William Fondlove	MRS. NISBETT.
Lydia	Lady's Maid to Widow Green	MISS VANDENHOFF.
Alice	House-keeper to Master Waller	MRS. TAYLEURE.
Phœbe	Maid to Constance	MISS WRIGHTEN.
Amelia		MISS GALLOT.
First Lady		MRS. GALLOT.

SCENE—LONDON.

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THE LOVE-CHASE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Lobby of an Inn.*

Enter CHARGEWELL, *hurriedly.*

Charg. What, hoa there! Hoa, sirrahs! More wine! Are the knaves asleep? Let not our guests cool, or we shall starve the till! Good waiting, more than viands and wine, doth help to make the Inn!—George! Richard!—Ralph!—Where are you?

Enter GEORGE.

George. Here am I, sir.

Charg. Have they taken in more wine to that company?

George. Yes, sir.

Charg. That's right. Serve them as quick as they order! A fair company! I have seen them here before. Take care they come again. A choice company! That Master Waller, I hear, is a fine spirit—leads the town. Pay him much duty. A deep purse, and easy strings!

George. And there is another, sir;—a capital gentleman, though from the country. A gentleman most learned in dogs and horses! He doth talk wondrous edification:—one Master Wildrake. I wish you could hear him, sir.

Charg. Well, well!—attend to them. Let them not cool o'er the liquor, or their calls will grow slack.

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Keep feeding the fire while it blazes, and the blaze will continue. Look to it well!

George. I will, sir.

Charg. And be careful, above all, that you please Master Waller. He is a guest worth pleasing; he is a gentleman. Free order, quick pay!

George. And such, I'll dare be sworn, is the other. A man of mighty stores of knowledge—most learned in dogs and horses! Never was I so edified by the discourse of mortal man. [*They go out severally.*

SCENE II.—*A Room.*

MASTER WALLER, MASTER WILDRAKE, MASTER TRUEWORTH, MASTER NEVILLE, *and* MASTER HUMPHREYS. *sitting round a table.*

Wal. Well, Master Wildrake, speak you of the chase!

To hear you one doth feel the bounding steed;
You bring the hounds and game, and all to view—
All scudding to the jovial huntsman's cheer!
And yet I pity the poor crowned deer,
And always fancy 'tis by fortune's spite,
That lordly head of his, he bears so high—
Like Virtue, stately in calamity,
And hunted by the human, worldly hound—
Is made to fly before the pack, that straight
Burst into song at prospect of his death.
You say their cry is harmony; and yet
The chorus scarce is music to my ear,
When I bethink me what it sounds to his;
Nor deem I sweet the note that rings the knell
Of the once merry forester!

Nev. The same things
Do please or pain, according to the thought
We take of them. Some smile at their own death.
Which most do shrink from, as a beast of prey
It kills to look upon. But you, who take
Such pity of the deer, whence follows it

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You hunt more costly game?—the comely maid,
To wit, that waits on buxom Widow Green?
Hum. The comely maid!—Such term not half the sum
Of her rich beauty gives! Were rule to go
By loveliness, I know not in the court,
Or city, lady might not fitly serve
That lady serving-maid!
True. Come! your defence?
Why show you ruth where there's least argument,
Deny it where there's most? You will not plead?
Oh, Master Waller, where we use to hunt
We think the sport no crime.
Hum. I give you joy,
You prosper in your chase.
Wal. Not so! The maid
In simple honesty I must pronounce
A miracle of virtue, well as beauty.
Nev. And well do I believe you, Master Waller;
Those know I who have ventured gift and promise
But for a minute of her ear—the boon
Of a poor dozen words spoke through a chink—
And come off bootless, save the haughty scorn
That cast their bounties back to them again.
True. That warrants her what Master Waller speaks her.
Is she so very fair?
Nev. Yes, Master Trueworth;
And I believe indeed an honest maid;
But love's the coin to market with for love,
And that knows Master Waller. On pretence
Of sneaking kindness for gay Widow Green,
He visits her for sake of her fair maid!
To whom a glance or word avails to hint
His proper errand: and—as glimpses only
Do only serve to whet the wish to see—
Awakens interest to hear the tale
So stintingly that's told. I know his practice—
Luck to you, Master Waller! If you win,
You merit it, who take the way to win!
Wal. Good, Master Neville!

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True. I should laugh to see
The poacher snared!—the maid, for mistress sought,
Turn out a wife.
Nev. How say you, Master Waller?
Things quite as strange have fallen!
Wal. Impossible!
True. Impossible! Most possible of things—
If thou'rt in love! Where merit lies itself,
What matters it to want the name, which, weigh'd,
Is not the worth of so much breath as it takes
To utter it! If, but from Nature's hand,
She is all you could expect of gentle blood,
Face, form, mien, speech; with these, what to belong
To lady more behoves—thoughts delicate,
Affections generous, and modesty—
Perfectionating, brightening crown of all!—
If she hath these—true titles to thy heart—
What does she lack that's title to thy hand?
The name of lady, which is none of these,
But may belong without! Thou might'st do worse
Than marry her. Thou wouldst, undoing her,
Yea, by my mother's name, a shameful act
Most shamefully performed!
Wal. [*starting up and drawing.*] Sir!
Nev. [*and the others, interposing.*] Gentlemen!
True. All's right! Sit down!—I will not draw again.
A word with you: If—as a man—thou say'st,
Upon thy honour, I have spoken wrong,
I'll ask thy pardon!—though I never hold
Communion with thee more!
Wal. [*after a pause, putting up his sword.*] My sword is sheathed!
Wilt let me take thy hand?
True. 'Tis thine, good sir,
And faster than before—A fault confess'd,
Is a new virtue added to a man!
Yet let me own some blame was mine. A truth
May be too harshly told—but 'tis a theme
I am tender on—I had a sister, sir——
You understand me!—'Twas my happiness
To own her once—I would forget her now!—

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I have forgotten!—I know not if she lives!—
Things of such strain as we were speaking of,
Spite of myself, remind me of her!—So!——
Nev. Sit down! Let's have more wine.
Wild. Not so, good sirs.
Partaking of your hospitality,
I have overlook'd good friends I came to visit,
And who have late become sojourners here—
Old country friends and neighbours, and with whom
I e'en take up my quarters. Master Trueworth,
Bear witness for me.
True. It is even so.
Sir William Fondlove and his charming daughter.
Wild. Ay, neighbour Constance. Charming, does he say?
Yes, neighbour Constance is a charming girl
To those that do not know her. If she plies me
As hard as was her custom in the country,
I should not wonder though, this very day,
I seek the home I quitted for a month! [*Aside.*
Good even, gentlemen.
Hum. Nay, if you go,
We all break up, and sally forth together.
Wal. Be it so—Your hand again, good Master Trueworth!
I am sorry I did pain you.
True. It is thine, sir. [*They go out.*

SCENE III.—*Sir William Fondlove's House.—A Room.*

Enter SIR WILLIAM FONDLOVE.

Sir Wil. At sixty-two, to be in leading-strings,
Is an old child—and with a daughter, too!
Her mother held me ne'er in check so strait
As she. I must not go but where she likes,
Nor see but whom she likes, do anything
But what she likes!—A slut, bare twenty-one!
Nor minces she commands!—A brigadier
More coolly doth not give his orders out

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Than she! Her waiting-maid is aide-de-camp;
My steward adjutant; my lacqueys sergeants;
That bring me her high pleasure how I march
And counter-march—when I'm on duty—when
I'm off—when suits it not to tell it me
Herself—"Sir William, thus my mistress says!"
As saying it were enough—no will of mine
Consulted! I will marry. Must I serve,
Better a wife, my mistress, than a daughter!
And yet the vixen says, if I do marry,
I'll find she'll rule my wife, as well as me!

Enter TRUEWORTH.

Ah, Master Trueworth! Welcome, Master Trueworth!

True. Thanks, sir; I am glad to see you look so well!

Sir Wil. Ah, Master Trueworth, when one turns the hill,
'Tis rapid going down! We climb by steps;
By strides we reach the bottom. Look at me,
And guess my age.

True. Turned fifty.

Sir Wil. Ten years more!
How marvellously well I wear! I think
You would not flatter me!—But scan me close,
And pryingly, as one who seeks a thing
He means to find—What signs of age dost see?

True. None!

Sir Wil. None about the corners of the eyes?
Lines that diverge like to the spider's joists,
Whereon he builds his airy fortalice?
They call them crow's feet—has the ugly bird
Been perching there?—Eh?—Well?

True. There's something like,
But not what one must see, unless he's blind
Like steeple on a hill.

Sir Wil. [*after a pause.*] Your eyes are good!
I am certainly a wonder for my age;
I walk as well as ever! Do I stoop?

True. A plummet from your head would find your heel.

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Sir Wil. It is my make—my make, good Master Trueworth;
I do not study it. Do you observe
The hollow in my back? That's natural.
As now I stand, so stood I when a child,
A rosy, chubby boy!—I am youthful to
A miracle! My arm is firm as 'twas
At twenty. Feel it!
True. [*feeling* SIR WILLIAM'S *arm.*]—It is deal!
Sir Wil. Oak—oak
Isn't it, Master Trueworth? Thou hast known me
Ten years and upwards. Think'st my leg is shrunk?
True. No.
Sir Wil. No! not in the calf?
True. As big a calf
As ever.
Sir Wil. Thank you, thank you—I believe it!
When others waste, 'tis growing time with me!
I feel it, Master Trueworth! Vigour, sir,
In every joint of me!—could run! could leap!
Why shouldn't I marry? Knife and fork I play
Better than many a boy of twenty-five—
Why shouldn't I marry? If they come to wine,
My brace of bottles can I carry home,
And ne'er a headache. Death! why shouldn't I marry?
True. I see in nature no impediment.
Sir Wil. Impediment? she's all appliances!—
And fortune's with me, too! The Widow Green
Gives hints to me. The pleasant Widow Green!
Whose fortieth year, instead of autumn, brings
A second summer in. Odds bodikins,
How young she looks! What life is in her eyes!
What ease is in her gait! while, as she walks,
Her waist, still tapering, takes it pliantly!
How lollingly she bears her head withal:
On this side now—now that! When enters she
A drawing-room, what worlds of gracious things
Her curtsey says!—she sinks with such a sway,
Greeting on either hand the company,
Then slowly rises to her state again!
She is the empress of the card-table!

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Her hand and arm!—Gods, did you see her deal—
With curved and pliant wrist dispense the pack,
Which, at the touch of her fair fingers fly!
How soft she speaks—how very soft! Her voice
Comes melting from her round and swelling throat,
Reminding you of sweetest, mellowest things—
Plums, peaches, apricots, and nectarines—
Whose bloom is poor to paint her cheeks and lips.
By Jove, I'll marry!

True. You forget, Sir William,
I do not know the lady.

Sir Wil. Great your loss.
By all the Gods I'll marry!—but my daughter
Must needs be married first. She rules my house;
Would rule it still, and will not have me wed.
A clever, handsome, darling, forward minx!
When I became a widower, the reins
Her mother dropp'd she caught,—a hoyden girl;
Nor since would e'er give up, howe'er I strove
To coax or catch them from her. One way still
Or t'other she would keep them—laugh, pout, plead;
Now vanquish me with water, now with fire;
Would box my face, and, ere I well could ope
My mouth to chide her, stop it with a kiss!
The monkey! what a plague she's to me! How
I love her! how I love the Widow Green!

True. Then marry her!

Sir Wil. I tell thee, first of all
Must needs my daughter marry. See I not
A hope of that; she nought affects the sex:
Comes suitor after suitor—all in vain.
Fast as they bow she curtsies, and says "Nay!"
Or she, a woman, lacks a woman's heart,
Or hath a special taste which none can hit.

True. Or taste, perhaps, which is already hit.

Sir Wil. Eh!—how?

True. Remember you no country friend,
Companion of her walks—her squire to church,
Her beau whenever she went visiting—
Before she came to town?

Sir Wil. No!

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True. None?—art sure?
No playmate when she was a girl?
Sir Wil. O! ay!
That Master Wildrake I did pray thee go
And wait for at the Inn, but had forgotten.
Is he come?
True. And in the house. Some friends that met him,
As he alighted, laid strong hands upon him,
And made him stop for dinner. We had else
Been earlier with you.
Sir Wil. Ha! I am glad he is come.
True. She may be smit with him.
Sir Wil. As cat with dog!
True. He heard her voice as we did mount the stairs,
And darted straight to join her.
Sir Wil. You shall see
What wondrous calm and harmony take place,
When fire meets gunpowder!
Con. [*without.*] Who sent for you?
What made you come?
Wild. [*without.*] To see the town, not you!
A kiss!
Con. I vow I'll not.
Wild. I swear you shall.
Con. A saucy cub! I vow, I had as lief
Your whipper-in had kiss'd me.
Sir Wil. Do you hear?
True. I do. Most pleasing discords!

Enter CONSTANCE *and* WILDRAKE.

Con. Father, speak
To neighbour Wildrake.
Sir Wil. Very glad to see him!
Wild. I thank you, good Sir William! Give you joy
Of your good looks!
Con. What, Phœbe!—Phœbe!—Phœbe!
Sir Wil. What want'st thou with thy lap-dog?
Con. Only, Sir,
To welcome neighbour Wildrake! What a figure
To show himself in town!

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Sir Wil. Wilt hold thy peace ?
Con. Yes ; if you'll lesson me to hold my laughter.
Wildrake !
Wild. Well ?
Con. Let me walk thee in the Park—
How they would stare at thee !
Sir Wil. Wilt ne'er give o'er ?
Wild. Nay, let her have her way—I heed her not !
Though to more courteous welcome I have right ;
Although I am neighbour Wildrake ! Reason is reason !
Con. And right is right ! so welcome, neighbour Wildrake,
I am very, very, very glad to see you !
Come, for a quarter of an hour we'll e'en
Agree together ! How do your horses, neighbour ?
Wild. Pshaw !
Con. And your dogs ?
Wild. Pshaw !
Con. Whipper-in and huntsman ?
Sir Wil. Converse of things thou know'st to talk about !
Con. And keep him silent, father, when I know
He cannot talk of any other things ?
How does thy hunter ? What a sorry trick
He play'd thee t'other day, to balk his leap
And throw thee, neighbour ! Did he balk the leap ?
Confess ! You sportsmen never are to blame !
Say you are fowlers, 'tis your dog's in fault !
Say you are anglers, 'tis your tackle's wrong ;
Say you are hunters, why the honest horse
That bears your weight, must bear your blunders too !
Why, whither go you ?
Wild. Anywhere from thee.
Con. *With* me you mean.
Wild. I mean it not.
Con. You do !
I'll give you fifty reasons for't—and first,
Where you go, neighbour, I'll go !
[*They go out*—WILDRAKE *pettishly*—CONSTANCE *laughing.*]
Sir Wil. Do you mark ?
Much love is there !

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True. Indeed, a heap, or none.
I'd wager on the heap!
Sir Wil. Ay!—Do you think
These discords, as in the musicians' art,
Are subtle servitors to harmony?
That all this war's for peace? This wrangling but
A masquerade where love his roguish face
Conceals beneath an ugly visor!—Well?
True. Your guess and my conceit are not a mile
Apart. Unlike to other common flowers,
The flower of love shows various in the bud;
'Twill look a thistle, and 'twill blow a rose!
And with your leave I'll put it to the test;
Affect myself, for thy fair daughter, love—
Make him my confidant—dilate to him
Upon the graces of her heart and mind,
Feature and form—that well may comment bear—
Till—like the practised connoisseur, who finds
A gem of art out in a household picture
The unskill'd owner held so cheap he grudged
Renewal of the chipp'd and tarnish'd frame,
But values now as priceless—I arouse him
Into a quick sense of the worth of that
Whose merit hitherto, from lack of skill,
Or dulling habit of acquaintanceship,
He has not been awake to.
Con. [*without.*] Neighbour Wildrake!
Sir Wil. Hither they come. I fancy well thy game!
O to be free to marry Widow Green!
I'll call her hence anon—then ply him well.
[Sir William *goes out.*
Wild. [*without.*] Nay, neighbour Constance!
True. He is high in storm.

Enter Wildrake *and* Constance.

Wild. To Lincolnshire, I tell thee.
Con. Lincolnshire!
What, prithee, takes thee off to Lincolnshire?
Wild. Too great delight in thy fair company.
True. Nay, Master Wildrake, why away so soon?
You are scarce a day in town!—Extremes like this,

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And starts of purpose, are the signs of love,
Though immatured as yet. [*Aside.*
Con. He's long enough
In town! What should he here? He's lost in town:
No man is he for concerts, balls, or routs!
No game he knows at cards, save rare Pope Joan!
He ne'er could master dance beyond a jig;
And as for music, nothing to compare
To the melodious yelping of a hound,
Except the braying of his huntsman's horn!
Ask *him* to stay in town!
Sir Wil. [*without.*] Hoa, Constance!
Con. Sir!—
Neighbour, a pleasant ride to Lincolnshire!
Good bye!
Sir Wil. [*without.*] Why, Constance!
Con. Coming, sir! Shake hands!
Neighbour, good bye! Don't look so wo-begone;
'Tis but a two-days' ride, and thou wilt see
Rover, and Spot, and Nettle, and the rest
Of thy dear country friends!
Sir Wil. [*without.*] Constance! I say.
Con. Anon!—Commend me to the gentle souls,
And pat them for me!—Will you, neighbour Wildrake?
Sir Wil. [*without.*] Why, Constance! Constance!
Con. In a moment, sir!
Good bye!—I'd cry, dear neighbour, if I could!
Good bye!—A pleasant day when next you hunt!
And, prithee, mind thy horse don't balk his leap!
Good bye—and, after dinner, drink my health!
"A bumper, sirs, to neighbour Constance!"—Do!—
And give it with a speech, wherein unfold
My many graces, more accomplishments,
And virtues topping either—in a word,
How I'm the fairest, kindest, best of neighbours!
[*They go out severally.*—TRUEWORTH *trying to pacify* WILDRAKE—CONSTANCE *laughing.*

END OF ACT I.

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ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Sir William's House.*

Enter TRUEWORTH *and* WILDRAKE.

Wild. Nay, master Trueworth, I must needs begone!
She treats me worse and worse! I am a stock,
That words have none to pay her. For her sake
I quit the town to-day. I like a jest,
But hers are jests past bearing. I am her butt,
She nothing does but practise on! A plague!—
Fly her shafts ever your way?

True. Would they did!

Wild. Art mad?—or wishest she should drive thee so?

True. Thou knowest her not.

Wild. I know not neighbour Constance?
Then know I not myself, or anything
Which as myself I know!

True. Heigh ho!

Wild. Heigh ho!
Why what a burden that for a man's song!
'Twould fit a maiden that was sick for love.
Heigh ho! Come ride with me to Lincolnshire,
And turn thy "heigh ho!" into "hilly ho!"

True. Nay, rather tarry thou in town with me.
Men sometimes find a friend's hand of avail,
When useless proves their own. Wilt lend me thine?

Wild. Or may my horse break down in a steeple chase!

True. A steeple chase. What made thee think of that?
I'm for the steeple—not to ride a race,
Only to get there!—nor alone in sooth;
But in fair company.

Wild. Thou'rt not in love!

True. Heigh ho!

Wild. Thou wouldst not marry!

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True. With your help.
Wild. And whom, I prithee?
True. Gentle mistress Constance!
Wild. What!—neighbour Constance?—Never did I dream
That mortal man would fall in love with her. [*Aside.*
In love with neighbour Constance!—I feel strange
At thought that she should marry!—[*Aside.*] Go to church
With neighbour Constance! That's a steeple chase
I never thought of. I feel very strange!
What seest in neighbour Constance?
True. Lovers' eyes
See with a vision proper to themselves,
Yet thousand eyes will vouch what mine affirm.
First, then, I see in her the mould express
Of woman—stature, feature, body, limb—
Breathing the gentle sex we value most,
When most 'tis at antipodes with ours!
Wild. You mean that neighbour Constance is a woman.
Why, yes; she is a woman certainly.
True. So much for person. Now for her complexion.
What shall we liken to her dainty skin?
Her arm for instance?——
Wild. Snow will match it.
True. Snow!
It is her arm without the smoothness on't;
Then is not snow transparent? 'Twill not do.
Wild. A pearl's transparent!
True. So it is, but yet
Yields not elastic to the thrilled touch!
I know not what to liken to her arm
Except its beauteous fellow! O, to be
The chosen friend of two such neighbours!
Wild. Would
His tongue would make a halt. He makes too free
With neighbour Constance! Can't he let her arms
Alone! I trust their chosen friend
Will ne'er be he! I'm vex'd. [*Aside.*
True. But graceful things

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Grow doubly graceful in the graceful use!
Hast mark'd her ever walk the drawing-room?
Wild. [*snappishly.*] No.
True. No! Why, where have been your eyes?
Wild. In my head!
But I begin to doubt if open yet. [*Aside.*
True. Yet that's a trifle to the dance; down which
She floats as though she were a form of air;
The ground feels not her foot, or tells not on't;
Her movements are the painting of the strain,
Its swell, its fall, its mirth, its tenderness!
Then is she fifty Constances! each moment
Another one, and each, except its fellow,
Without a peer! You have danced with her?
Wild. I hate
To dance! I can't endure to dance!—Of course
You have danced with her?
True. I have.
Wild. You have?
True. I have.
Wild. I do abominate to dance!—Could carve
Fiddlers and company! A dancing man
To me was ever like a dancing dog!
Save less to be endured!—Ne'er saw I one
But I bethought me of the master's whip.
True. A man might bear the whip to dance with her!
Wild. Not if I had the laying of it on!
True. Well; let that pass. The lady is the theme.
Wild. Yes; make an end of it!—I'm sick of it.
[*Aside.*
True. How well she plays the harpsichord and harp!
How well she sings to them! Whoe'er would prove
The power of song, should hear thy neighbour sing,
Especially a love song!
Wild. Does she sing
Such songs to thee?
True. O yes, and constantly.
For such I ever ask her.
Wild. Forward minx! [*Aside.*
Maids should not sing love songs to gentlemen!
Think'st neighbour Constance is a girl to love?

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True. A girl to love?—Ay, and with all her soul!
Wild. How know you that?
True. I have studied close the sex.
Wild. You town-rakes are the devil for the sex!
[*Aside.*
True. Not your most sensitive and serious maid
I'd always take for deep impressions. Mind
The adage of the bow. The pensive brow
I have oft seen bright in wedlock, and anon
O'ercast in widowhood; then bright again,
Ere half the season of the weeds was out.
While, in the airy one, I've known one cloud
Forerunner of a gloom that ne'er clear'd up—
So would it prove with neighbour Constance. Not
On superficial grounds she'll ever love:
But once she does, the odds are ten to one
Her first love is her last!
Wild. I wish I ne'er
Had come to town! I was a happy man
Among my dogs and horses [*aside*]. Hast thou broke
Thy passion to her?
True. Never.
Wild. Never?
True. No.
I hoped you'd act my proxy there.
Wild. I thank you.
True. I knew 'twould be a pleasure to you.
Wild. Yes;
A pleasure!—an unutterable pleasure!
True. Thank you! You make my happiness your own.
Wild. I do.
True. I see you do. Dear Master Wildrake!
O, what a blessing is a friend in need!
You'll go and court your neighbour for me?
Wild. Yes.
True. And says she "nay" at first, you'll press again.
Wild. Ay, and again!
True. There's one thing I mistrust—yea, most mistrust,
That of my poor deserts you'll make too much.

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Wild. Fear anything but that.
True. 'Twere better far
You slightly spoke of them.
Wild. You think so?
True. Yes,
Or rather did not speak of them at all.
Wild. You think so?
True. Yes.
Wild. Then I'll not say a word
About them.
True. Thank you! A judicious friend
Is better than a zealous—You are both!
I see you'll plead my cause as 'twere your own;
Then stay in town, and win your neighbour for me;
Make me the envy of a score of men
That die for her as I do.—Make her mine,
And when the last "Amen!" declares complete
The mystic tying of the holy knot,
And 'fore the priest a blushing wife she stands,
Be thine the right to claim the second kiss
She pays for change from maidenhood to wifehood.
[*Goes out.*
Wild. Take that thyself! The first be mine, or none.
A man in love with neighbour Constance!—Never
Dream'd I that such a thing could come to pass!
Such person, such endowments, such a soul!
I never thought to ask myself before
If she were man or woman! Suitors, too,
Dying for her! I'll e'en make one among 'em!
Woo her to go to church along with him,
And for my pains the privilege to take
The second kiss! I'll take the second kiss,
And first one too—and last! No man shall touch
Her lips but me. I'll massacre the man
That looks upon her! Yet what chance have I
With lovers of the town, whose study 'tis
To please your lady belles!—who dress, walk, talk,
To hit their tastes—what chance, a country squire
Like me? Yet your true fair, I have heard, prefers
The man before his coat at any time,
And such a one must neighbour Constance be.

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I'll show a limb with any of them! Silks
I'll wear, nor keep my legs in cases more.
I'll learn to dance town-dances, and frequent
Their concerts! Die away at melting strains,
Or seem to do so—far the easier thing,
And as effective quite; leave nought undone
To conquer neighbour Constance.

Enter Lash.

Lash. Sir.
Wild. Well, sir.
Lash. So please you, sir, your horse is at the door.
Wild. Unsaddle him again and put him up.
And, hark you, get a tailor for me, sir—
The rarest can be found.
Lash. The man's below, sir,
That owns the mare your worship thought to buy.
Wild. Tell him I do not want her, sir.
Lash. I vow,
You will not find her like in Lincolnshire.
Wild. Go to! She's spavin'd.
Lash. Sir!
Wild. Touch'd in the wind.
Lash. I trust my master be not touch'd in the head! [*Aside.*
I vow, a faultless beast!
Wild. I want her not,
And that's your answer—Go to the hosier's, sir,
And bid him send me samples of his gear,
Of twenty different kinds.
Lash. I will, sir.———Sir!
Wild. Well, sir.
Lash. Squire Brush's huntsman's here, and says
His master's kennel is for sale.
Wild. The dogs
Are only fit for hanging!
Lash. Finer bred—
Wild. Sirrah, if more to me thou talk'st of dogs,
Horses, or aught that to thy craft belongs,
Thou may'st go hang for me!—A cordwainer
Go fetch me straight—the choicest in the town.

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Away, sir! Do thy errands smart and well
As thou canst crack thy whip! [LASH *goes out.*] Dear neighbour Constance,
I'll give up horses, dogs, and all for thee! [*Goes out.*

SCENE II.

Enter WIDOW GREEN *and* LYDIA.

W. Green. Lydia, my gloves. If Master Waller calls,
I shall be in at three; and say the same
To old Sir William Fondlove. Tarry yet!—
What progress think you make I in the heart
Of fair young Master Waller? Gods, my girl,
It is a heart to win and man as well!
How speed I, think you? Didst, as I desired,
Detain him in my absence when he call'd,
And, without seeming, sound him touching me?

Lydia. Yes.

W. Green. And affects he me, or not? How guess you?
What said he of me? Look'd he balk'd, or not,
To find me not at home? Inquired he, when
I would be back, as much he longed to see me?
What did he—said he? Come!—Is he in love,
Or like to fall into it? Goes well my game,
Or shall I have my labour for my pains?

Lydia. I think he is in love.—O poor evasion!
O to love truth, and yet not dare to speak it! [*Aside.*

W. Green. You think he is in love—I'm sure of it.
As well have ask'd you has he eyes and ears,
And brain and heart to use them? Maids do throw
Trick after trick away, but widows know
To play their cards! How am I looking, Lydia?

Lydia. E'en as you ever look.

W. Green. Handsome, my girl?
Eh? Clear in my complexion? Eh?—brimful
Of spirits? not too much of me, nor yet
Too little?—Eh?—A woman worth a man?
Look at me, Lydia! Would you credit, girl,
I was a scare-crow before marriage?

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Lydia. Nay !—
W. Green. Girl, but I tell thee "yea." That gown
of thine—
And thou art slender—would have hung about me!
There's something of me now! good sooth, enough!
Lydia, I'm quite contented with myself;
I'm just the thing, methinks, a widow should be.
So Master Waller, you believe, affects me?
But, Lydia, not enough to hook the fish;
To prove the angler's skill, it must be caught;
And lovers, Lydia, like the angler's prey—
Which when he draws it near the landing-place
Takes warning and runs out the slender line,
And with a spring perchance jerks off the hold
When we do fish for them, and hook, and think
They are all but in the creel, will make the dart
That sets them free to roam the flood again!
Lydia. Is't so?
W. Green. Thou'lt find it so, or better luck
Than many another maid! Now mark me, Lydia,
Sir William Fondlove fancies me. 'Tis well!
I do not fancy him! What should I do
With an old man?—Attend upon the gout,
Or the rheumatics! Wrap me in the cloud
Of a darken'd chamber—'stead of shining out,
The sun of balls, and routs, and gala days!
But he affects me, Lydia; so he may!
Now take a lesson from me—Jealousy
Had better go with open, naked breast,
Than pin or button with a gem—Less plague,
The plague spot; that doth speedy make an end
One way or t'other, girl—Yet, never love
Was warm without a spice of jealousy.
Thy lesson now—Sir William Fondlove's rich,
And riches, though they're paste, yet being many,
The jewel love we often cast away for.
I use him but for Master Waller's sake.
Dost like my policy?
Lydia. You will not chide me?
W. Green. Nay, Lydia, I do like to hear thy thoughts,
They are such novel things—plants that do thrive

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With country air! I marvel still they flower,
And thou so long in town! Speak freely, girl!
Lydia. I cannot think love thrives by artifice,
Or can disguise its mood, and show its face.
I would not hide one portion of my heart
Where I did give it and did feel 'twas right,
Nor feign a wish, to mask a wish that was,
Howe'er to keep it. For no cause except
Myself would I be loved. What were't to me,
My lover valued me the more, the more
He saw me comely in another's eyes,
When his alone the vision I would show
Becoming to? I have sought the reason oft,
They paint Love as a child, and still have thought,
It was because true love, like infancy,
Frank, trusting, unobservant of its mood,
Doth show its wish at once, and means no more!
W. Green. Thou'lt find out better when thy time doth come.
Now would'st believe I love not Master Waller?
I never knew what love was, Lydia;
That is, as your romances have it. First,
I married for a fortune. Having that,
And being freed from him that brought it me,
I marry now, to please my vanity,
A man that is the fashion. O the delight
Of a sensation, and yourself the cause!
To note the stir of eyes, and ears, and tongues,
When they do usher Mistress Waller in,
Late Widow Green, her hand upon the arm
Of her young, handsome husband!—How my fan
Will be in requisition—I do feel
My heart begin to flutter now—my blood
To mount into my cheek! My honey-moon
Will be a month of triumphs!—"Mistress Waller!"
That name, for which a score of damsels sigh,
And but the widow had the wit to win!
Why it will be the talk of East and West,
And North and South!—The children loved the man,
And lost him so—I liked, but there I stopp'd;
For what is it to love, but mind and heart

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And soul upon another to depend?
Depend upon another!—Nothing be
But what another wills!—Give up the rights
Of mine own brain and heart!—I thank my stars
I never came to that extremity! [*Goes out.*

Lydia. She never loved, indeed!—She knows not love,
Except what's told of it!—She never felt it.
To stem a torrent, easy, looking at it;
But once you venture in, you nothing know
Except the speed with which you're borne away,
Howe'er you strive to check it. She suspects not
Her maid, not she, brings Master Waller hither.
Nor dare I undeceive her. Well might she say
Her young and handsome husband! Yet his face
And person are the least of him, and vanish
When shines his soul out through his open eye!
He all but says he loves me!—His respect
Has vanquish'd me! He looks the will to speak
His passion, and the fear that ties his tongue—
The fear?—He loves not honestly!—and yet
I'll swear he loves!—I'll swear he honours me!
It is but my condition is a bar,
Denies him give me all. But knew he me
As I do know myself!—Whate'er his purpose,
When next we speak, he shall declare it to me.
[*Goes out.*

SCENE III.—*Sir William Fondlove's.*

Enter CONSTANCE, *dressed for riding, and* PHŒBE.

Con. Well, Phœbe, would you know me? Are those locks
That cluster on my forehead and my cheek,
Sufficient mask? Show I what I would seem,
A lady for the chase? My darken'd brows
And heighten'd colour, foreign to my face,
Do they my face pass off for stranger too?
What think you?

Phœbe. That he'll ne'er discover you.

Con. Then send him to me—say a lady wants

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To speak with him—unless indeed it be
A man in lady's gear—I look so bold
And speak so gruff! Away! [PHŒBE *goes out.*] That
I am glad
He stays in town, I own; but if I am,
'Tis only for the tricks I'll play upon him;
And now begin—persuading him his fame
Hath made me fancy him, and brought me hither
On visit to his worship. Soft! his foot!
This he?—Why, what has metamorphosed him,
And changed my sportsman to fine gentleman?
Well he becomes his clothes!—But check my wonder,
Lest I forget myself—Why, what an air
The fellow hath!—A man to set a cap at!

Enter WILDRAKE.

Wild. Kind lady, I attend your fair commands.
Con. My veiled face denies me justice, sir,
Else would you see a maiden's blushing cheek
Do penance for her forwardness, too late,
I own, repented of. Yet if 'tis true,
By our own hearts of others we may judge,
Mine in no peril lies that's shown to you,
Whose heart, I'm sure, is noble. Worthy sir,
Souls attract souls, when they're of kindred vein.
The life that you love, I love. Well I know,
'Mongst those who breast the feats of the bold chase,
You stand without a peer; and for myself
I dare avow 'mong such, none follows them
With heartier glee than I do.
Wild. Churl were he
That would gainsay you, madam!
Con. [*Curtsying.*] What delight
To back the flying steed, that challenges
The wind for speed!—seems native more of air
Than earth!—whose burden only lends him fire!—
Whose soul, in his task, turns labour into sport!
Who makes your pastime his! I sit him now!
He takes away my breath!—He makes me reel!
I touch not earth—I see not—hear not—All
Is ecstacy of motion!

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Wild. You are used,
I see, to the chase.
Con. I am, sir! Then the leap,
To see the saucy barrier, and know
The mettle that can clear it! Then your time
To prove you master of the manage. Now
You keep him well together for a space,
Both horse and rider braced as you were one,
Scanning the distance—then you give him rein,
And let him fly at it, and o'er he goes
Light as a bird on wing.
Wild. 'Twere a bold leap,
I see, that turn'd you, madam.
Con. [*Curtsying.*] Sir, you're good!
And then the hounds, sir! Nothing I admire
Beyond the running of the well-train'd pack.
The training's everything! Keen on the scent!
At fault none losing heart!—but all at work!
None leaving his task to another!—answering
The watchful huntsman's caution, check, or cheer,
As steed his rider's rein! Away they go!
How close they keep together!—What a pack!
Nor turn, nor ditch, nor stream divides them—as
They moved with one intelligence, act, will!
And then the concert they keep up!—enough
To make one tenant of the merry wood,
To list their jocund music!
Wild. You describe
The huntsman's pastime to the life!
Con. I love it!
To wood and glen, hamlet, and town, it is
A laughing holiday!—Not a hill-top
But's then alive! Footmen with horsemen vie,
All earth's astir, roused with the revelry
Of vigour, health, and joy!—Cheer awakes cheer,
While Echo's mimic tongue, that never tires,
Keeps up the hearty din! Each face is then
Its neighbour's glass—where gladness sees itself,
And at the bright reflection, grows more glad!
Breaks into tenfold mirth!—laughs like a child!
Would make a gift of its heart, it is so free!

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Would scarce accept a kingdom; 'tis so rich!
Shakes hands with all, and vows it never knew
That life was life before!
Wild. Nay, every way
You do fair justice, lady, to the chase;
But fancies change.
Con. Such fancy is not mine.
Wild. I would it were not mine, for your fair sake.
I have quite given o'er the chase.
Con. You say not so!
Wild. Forsworn, indeed, the sportsman's life, and grown,
As you may partly see, town gentleman.
I care not now to mount a steed, unless
To amble 'long the street; no paces mind,
Except my own, to walk the drawing-room,
Or in the ball-room to come off with grace;
No leap for me, to match the light coupé;
No music like the violin and harp,
To which the huntsman's dog and horn I find
Are somewhat coarse and homely minstrelsy:
Then fields of ill-dress'd rustics, you'll confess,
Are well-exchanged for rooms of beaux and belles;
In short, I've ta'en another thought of life—
Become another man!
Con. The cause, I pray?
Wild. The cause of causes, lady.
Con. He's in love! [*Aside.*
Wild. To you, of women, I would name it last;
Yet your frank bearing merits like return;
I, that did hunt the game, am caught myself
In chase I never dream'd of! [*Goes out.*
Con. He is in love!
Wildrake's in love! 'Tis that keeps him in town,
Turns him from sportsman to town-gentleman.
I never dream'd that he could be in love!
In love with whom?—I'll find the vixen out!
What right has she to set her cap at him?
I warrant me, a forward artful minx;
I hate him worse than ever.—I'll do all
I can to spoil the match. He'll never marry—

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Sure he will never marry! He will have
More sense than that! My back doth ope and shut—
My temples throb and shoot—I am cold and hot!
Were he to marry, there would be an end
To neighbour Constance—neighbour Wildrake—why
I should not know myself! [*Enter* TRUEWORTH.
Dear master Trueworth,
What think you!—neighbour Wildrake is in love!
In love!—would you believe it, master Trueworth?
Ne'er heed my dress and looks, but answer me.
Know'st thou of any lady he has seen
That's like to cozen him?
True. I am not sure—
We talk'd to-day about the Widow Green!
Con. Her that my father fancies.—Let him wed her!
Marry her to-morrow—if he will, to-night.
I can't spare neighbour Wildrake—neighbour Wildrake!
Although I would not marry him myself,
I could not bear that other married him!
Go to my father—'tis a proper match!
He has my leave! He's welcome to bring home
The Widow Green. I'll give up house and all!
She would be mad to marry neighbour Wildrake;
He would wear out her patience—plague her to death,
As he does me.—She must not marry him!
[*They go out.*

END OF ACT II.

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ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Widow Green's.*

Enter MASTER WALLER, *following* LYDIA.

Wal. But thou shalt hear me, gentle Lydia.
Sweet maiden, thou art frighten'd at thyself!
Thy own perfections 'tis that talk to thee.
Thy beauty rich!—Thy richer grace!—thy mind,
More rich again than that, though richest each!
Except for these, I had no tongue for thee,
Eyes for thee!—ears!—had never follow'd thee!—
Had never loved thee, Lydia!—Hear me!——

Lydia. Love
Should seek its match.—No match am I for thee.

Wal. Right! Love should seek its match; and that is, love
Or nothing! Station—fortune—find their match
In things resembling them. They are not love!
Comes love (that subtle essence, without which
Life were but leaden dulness!—weariness!
A plodding trudger on a heavy road!)
Comes it of title-deeds which fools may boast?
Or coffers vilest hands may hold the keys of?
Or that ethereal lamp that lights the eyes
To shed their sparkling lustre o'er the face,
Gives to the velvet skin its blushing glow,
And burns as bright beneath the peasant's roof
As roof of palaced prince? Yes! Love should seek
Its match—then give my love its match in thine,
Its match which in thy gentle breast doth lodge
So rich—so earthly, heavenly fair and rich,
As monarchs have no thought of on their thrones,
Which kingdoms do bear up.

Lydia. Wast thou a monarch,
Me wouldst thou make thy queen?

Wal. I would.

Lydia. What!—Pass
A princess by for me?

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Wal. I would.
Lydia. Suppose
Thy subjects would prevent thee?
Wal. Then, in spite
Of them!
Lydia. Suppose they were too strong for thee?
Wal. Why then, I'd give them up my throne—content
With that thou'dst yield me in thy gentle breast.
Lydia. Can subjects do what monarchs do?
Wal. Far more!
Far less!
Lydia. Among those things, where more their power,
Is marriage one?
Wal. Yes.
Lydia. And no part of love,
You say, is rank or wealth?
Wal. No part of love.
Lydia. Is marriage part of love?
Wal. At times it is,
At times is not. Men love and marry—love
And marry not.
Lydia. Then have they not the power;
So must they hapless part with those they love.
Wal. O no! not part! How could they love and part?
Lydia. How could they love not part, not free to wed?
Wal. Alone in marriage doth not union lie!
Lydia. Alone where hands are free!—O yes—alone!
Love that is love, bestoweth all it can!
It is protection, if 'tis anything,
Which nothing in its object leaves exposed
Its care can shelter.—Love that's free to wed,
Not wedding, doth profane the name of love,
Which is, on high authority to Earth's,
For Heaven did sit approving at its feast,
A holy thing!—Why make you love to me?
Women whose hearts are free, by nature tender,
Their fancies hit by those they are besought by,

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Do first impressions quickly—deeply take;
And, balk'd in their election, have been known
To droop a whole life through! Gain for a maid,
A broken heart!—to barter her young love,
And find she changed it for a counterfeit!
Wal. If there is truth in man, I love thee!—Hear me!
In wedlock, families claim property.
Old notions, which we needs must humour often,
Bar us to wed where we are forced to love!
Thou hear'st?
Lydia. I do.
Wal. My family is proud;
Our ancestor, whose arms we bear, did win
An earldom by his deeds. 'Tis not enough
I please myself!—I must please others, who
Desert in wealth and station only see.
Thou hear'st?
Lydia. I do.
Wal. I cannot marry thee,
And must I lose thee?—Do not turn away!
Without the altar I can honour thee!
Can cherish thee, nor swear it to the priest;
For more than life I love thee!
Lydia. Say thou hatest me,
And I'll believe thee.—Wherein differs love
From hate, to do the work of hate—destroy?
Thy ancestor won title by his deeds!
Was one of them, to teach an honest maid
The deed of sin—first steal her love, and then
Her virtue? If thy family is proud,
Mine, sir, is worthy! if we are poor, the lack
Of riches, sir, is not the lack of shame!
That I should act a part, would raise a blush,
Nor fear to burn an honest brother's cheek!
Thou wouldst share a throne with me!—Thou wouldst
rob me of
A throne!—reduce me from dominion to
Base vassalage!—pull off my crown for me,
And give my forehead in its place a brand!
You have insulted me.—To show you, sir,
The heart you make so light of, you are beloved—

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But she that tells you so, tells you beside
She ne'er beholds you more! [*Goes out.*
Wal. Stay, Lydia!—No!—
'Tis vain! She is in virtue resolute,
As she is bland and tender in affection.
She is a miracle, beholding which
Wonder doth grow on wonder!—What a maid!
No mood but doth become her—yea, adorn her.
She turns unsightly anger into beauty!
Sour scorn grows sweetness, touching her sweet lips!
And indignation, lighting on her brow,
Transforms to brightness as the cloud to gold
That overhangs the sun! I love her!—Ay!
And all the throes of serious passion feel
At thought of losing her!—so my light love,
Which but her person did at first affect,
Her soul has metamorphosed—made a thing
Of solid thoughts and wishes—I must have her!

Enter WIDOW GREEN, *unnoticed by* WALLER, *who continues abstracted.*

W. Green. What!—Master Waller, and contemplative!
Presumptive proof of love! Of me he thinks!
Revolves the point "to be or not to be!"
"To be!" by all the triumphs of my sex!
There was a sigh! My life upon't, that sigh
If construed would translate "Dear Widow Green!"
Wal. Enchanting woman!
W. Green. That is I!—most deep
Abstraction, sure concomitant of love.
Now could I see his busy fancy's painting,
How should I blush to gaze upon myself.
Wal. The matchless form of woman! The choice
Of the aspiring artist, whose ambition [culling
Robs Nature to out-do her—the perfections
Of her rare various workmanship combines
To aggrandize his art at Nature's cost,
And make a paragon!
W. Green. Gods! how he draws me!
Soon as he sees me, at my feet he falls!

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Good Master Waller!
Wal. Ha! The Widow Green!
W. Green. He is confounded!—So am I. O dear!
How catching is emotion.—He can't speak!
O beautiful confusion! Amiable
Excess of modesty with passion struggling!
Now comes he to declare himself, but wants
The courage.—I will help him.—Master Waller!

Enter SIR WILLIAM FONDLOVE.

Sir. Wil. Dear Widow Green!
W. Green. Sir William Fondlove!
Wal. Thank
My lucky stars! [*Aside.*
W. Green. I would he had the gout,
And kept his room! [*Aside.*] You're welcome, dear Sir William!
'Tis very, very kind of you to call.
Sir William Fondlove—Master Waller. Pray
Be seated, gentlemen.—He shall requite me
For his untimely visit. Though the nail
Be driven home, it may want clinching yet
To make the hold complete! For that I'll use him.
[*Aside.*
You're looking monstrous well, Sir William! and
No wonder. You're a mine of happy spirits!
Some women talk of such and such a style
Of features in a man.—Give me good humour;
That lights the homeliest visage up with beauty,
And makes the face, where beauty is already,
Quite irresistible!
Sir Wil. That's hitting hard. [*Aside.*
Dear Widow Green, don't say so! On my life
You flatter me.—You almost make me blush.
W. Green. I durst not turn to Master Waller now,
Nor need I.—I can fancy how he looks!
I warrant me he scowls on poor Sir William,
As he could eat him up.—I will improve
His discontent, and so make sure of him. [*Aside.*
I flatter you, Sir William! O, you men!
You men, that talk so meek, and all the while

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Do know so well your power! Who would think
You had a marriageable daughter! You
Did marry very young.
Sir Wil. A boy!—a boy!
Who knew not his own mind.
W. Green. Your daughter's twenty.
Come, you at least were twenty when you married;
That makes you forty.
Sir Wil. O dear! Widow Green.
W. Green. Not forty?
Sir Wil. You do quite embarrass me!
I own I have the feelings of a boy,
The freshness and the glow of spring-time yet,—
The relish yet for my young school-days' sports;
Could whip a top—could shoot at taw—could play
At prison-bars and leap-frog, so I might—
Not with a limb, perhaps, as supple, but
With quite as supple will.—Yet I confess
To more than forty!
W. Green. Do you say so? Well,
I'll never guess a man's age by his looks
Again. – Poor Master Waller! He must writhe
To hear I think Sir William is so young.
I'll turn his visit yet to more account. [*Aside.*
A handsome ring, Sir William, that you wear!
Sir Wil. Pray look at it.
W. Green. The mention of a ring
Will take away his breath.
Wal. She must be mine
Whate'er her terms! [*Aside.*
W. Green. I'll steal a look at him!
Wal. What! though it be the ring?—the marriage
If that she sticks at, she deserves to wear it! [ring?
O, the debate which love and prudence hold! [*Aside.*
W. Green. How highly he is wrought upon!—His hands
Are clench'd!—I warrant me his frame doth shake!
Poor Master Waller! I have fill'd his heart
Brimful with passion for me.—The delight
Of proving thus my power!
Sir Wil. Dear Widow Green!—
She hears not! How the ring hath set her thinking!

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I'll try and make her jealous [*aside.*]—Widow Green!
W. Green. Sir William Fondlove?
Sir Wil. Would you think that ring
Could tell a story?
W. Green. Could it? Ah, Sir William!
I fear you are a rogue.
Sir Wil. O no!
W. Green. You are!
Sir Wil. No, on my honour! Would you like to hear
The story of the ring?
W. Green. Much,—very much.
Sir Wil. Think'st we may venture draw our chairs apart
A little more from Master Waller.
W. Green. Yes.
He'll bring it to a scene! Dear—dear Sir William,
How much I am obliged to him! A scene!
Gods, we shall have a scene!—Good Master Waller,
Your leave I pray you for a minute, while
Sir William says a word or two to me.
He durst not trust his tongue for jealousy! [*Aside.*
Now, dear Sir William.
Sir Wil. You must promise me
You will not think me vain.
W. Green. No fear of that.
Sir Wil. Nor given to boast.
W. Green. O! dear Sir William!
Sir Wil. Nor
A flirt!
W. Green. O! who would take you for a flirt?
Sir Wil. How very kind you are!
W. Green. Go on, Sir William.
Sir Wil. Upon my life, I fear you'll think me vain!
I'm cover'd with confusion at the thought
Of what I've done. 'Twas very, very wrong
To promise you the story of the ring;
Men should not talk of such things.
W. Green. Such as what?
As ladies' favours?
Sir Wil. 'Pon my life, I feel
As I were like to sink into the earth.

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W. Green. A lady then it was gave you the ring?
Sir Wil. Don't ask me to say yes, but only scan
The inside of the ring. How much she's moved. [*Aside.*
Wal. They to each other company enough!
I, company for no one but myself.
I'll take my leave, nor trouble them to pay
The compliments of parting. Lydia! Lydia! [*Goes out.*
W. Green. What's here? "Eliza!"—So it was a lady!
How wondrously does Master Waller bear it.
He surely will not hold much longer out. [*Aside.*
Sir William! Nay, look up! What cause to cast
Your eyes upon the ground? What an it were
A lady?
Sir Wil. You're not angry?
W. Green. No!
Sir Wil. She is.
I'll take the tone she speaks in 'gainst the word,
For fifty crowns. I have not told you all
About the ring; though I would sooner die
Than play the braggart!—yet as truth is truth,
And told by halves, may from a simple thing,
By misconstruction, to a monster grow,
I'll tell the whole truth!
W. Green. Dear Sir William, do!
Sir Wil. The lady was a maid, and very young;
Nor there in justice to her must I stop,
But say that she was beautiful as young,
And add to that that she was learned too,
Almost enough to win for her that title,
Our sex, in poor conceit of their own merits,
And narrow spirit of monopoly,
And jealousy which gallantry eschews,
Do give to women who assert their right
To minds as well as we.
W. Green. What! a blue stocking?
Sir Wil. I see—She'll come to calling names at last.
[*Aside.*
I should offend myself to quote the term.
But to return, for yet I have not done;
And further yet may go, then progress on
That she was young, that she was beautiful.

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A wit and learned are nought to what's to come—
She had a heart!——
W. Green. [*who during* SIR W.'s *speech has turned gradually.*]
What, Master Waller gone! [*Aside.*
Sir Wil. I say she had a heart—
W. Green. [*starting up*—SIR WILLIAM *also.*] A plague upon her!
Sir Wil. I knew she would break out! [*Aside.*
W. Green. Here, take the ring.
It has ruin'd me!
Sir Wil. I vow thou hast no cause
For anger!
W. Green. Have I not? I am undone,
And all about that bauble of a ring.
Sir Wil. You're right, it is a bauble.
W. Green. And the minx
That gave it thee!
Sir Wil. You're right, she was a minx.
I knew she'd come to calling names at last. [*Aside.*
W. Green. Sir William Fondlove, leave me.
Sir Wil. Widow Green!—
W. Green. You have undone me, sir!
Sir Wil. Don't say so!—Don't!
It was a girl—a child gave me the ring!
W. Green. Do you hear me, sir? I bade you leave
Sir Wil. If [me.
I thought you were so jealous.
W. Green. Jealous, sir!
Sir William! quit my house.
Sir Wil. A little girl
To make you jealous!
W. Green. Sir, you'll drive me mad!
Sir Wil. A child, a perfect child, not ten years old!
W. Green. Sir, I would be alone, sir!
Sir Wil. Young enough
To dandle still her doll!
W. Green. Sir William Fondlove!
Sir Wil. Dear Widow Green!
W. Green. I hate you, sir!—Detest you!—Never wish
To see you more! You have ruin'd me!—Undone me!

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A blighted life I wear, and all through you!
The fairest hopes that ever woman nourish'd
You've canker'd in the very blowing! bloom,
And sweet destroy'd, and nothing left me, but
The melancholy stem.
Sir Wil. And all about
A little slut I gave a rattle to!—
Would pester me for gingerbread and comfits!
A little roguish feigning!—A love trick
I play'd to prove your love!
W. Green. Sir William Fondlove!
If of my own house you'll not suffer me
To be the mistress, I will leave it to you!
Sir Wil. Dear Widow Green! The ring——
W. Green. Confound the ring,
The donor of it, thee, and everything! [*Goes out.*
Sir Wil. She is over head and ears in love with me.
She's mad with love! There's love and all its signs!
She's jealous of me unto very death!
Poor Widow Green! I warrant she is now
In tears!—I think I hear her sob!—Poor thing,
Sir William! O Sir William! You have raised
A furious tempest! Set your wits to work
To turn it to a calm. No question that
She loves me!—None then that she'll take me! So
I'll have the marriage settlements made out
To-morrow, and a special licence got,
And marry her the next day! I will make
Quick work of it, and take her by surprise!
Who but a widower a widow's match;
What could she see with else but partial eyes
To guess me only forty! I'm a wonder!
What shall I pass for in my wedding suit!
I vow I am a puzzle to myself,
As well as all the world besides.—Odd's life!
To win the heart of buxom Widow Green! [*Goes out.*

WIDOW GREEN *re-enters with* LYDIA.

W. Green. At last the dotard's gone! Fly, Lydia, fly,
This letter bear to Master Waller straight;
Quick, quick, or I'm undone! He is abused,

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And I must undeceive him—own my love,
And heart and hand at his disposal lay.
Answer me not, my girl—Obey me! Fly. [*Goes out.*
Lydia. Untowardly it falls!—I had resolved
This hour to tell her I must quit her service!
Go to his house! I will not disobey
Her last commands!—I'll leave it at the door,
And as it closes on me think I take
One more adieu of him!—Hard destiny! [*Goes out.*

SCENE II.—*A Room in Sir William's.*

Enter CONSTANCE.

Con. The booby! He must fall in love, indeed!
And now he's nought but sentimental looks
And sentences, pronounced 'twixt breath and voice!
And attitudes of tender languishment!
Nor can I get from him the name of her
Hath turn'd him from a stock into a fool.
He hems and haws, now titters, now looks grave!
Begins to speak and halts! takes off his eyes
To fall in contemplation on a chair,
A table, or the ceiling, wall or floor!
I'll plague him worse and worse! O here he comes!

Enter WILDRAKE.

Wild. Despite her spiteful usage I'm resolved
To tell her now. Dear neighbour Constance!
Con. Fool!
Accost me like a lady, sir! I hate
The name of neighbour!
Wild. Mistress Constance, then—
I'll call thee that.
Con. Don't call me anything!
I hate to hear thee speak—to look at thee,
To dwell in the same house with thee!
Wild. In what
Have I offended?
Con. What!—I hate an ape!
Wild. An ape!

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Con. Who bade thee ape the gentleman?
And put on dress that don't belong to thee?
Go! change thee with thy whipper-in or huntsman,
And none will doubt thou wearest thy own clothes.
Wild. A pretty pass! Mock'd for the very dress
I bought to pleasure her! Untoward things
Are women! [*Aside. Walks backwards and forwards.*
Con. Do you call that walking? Pray
What makes you twist your body so, and take
Such pains to turn your toes out? If you'd walk,
Walk thus! walk like a man, as I do now! [*Walking.*]
Is yours the way a gentleman should walk?
You neither walk like man nor gentleman!
I'll show you how you walk [*mimicking him.*] Do you call that walking?
Wild. My thanks, for a drill-sergeant twice a day
For her sake! [*Aside.*
Con. Now, of all things in the world,
What made you dance last night?
Wild. What made me dance?
Con. Right! It was anything but dancing! Steps
That never came from dancing-school— nor English,
Nor Scotch, nor Irish!—You must try to cut,
And how you did it! [*Cuts.*] That's the way to cut!
And then your chassé! Thus you went, and thus [*mimicking him,*]
As though you had been playing at hop, step,
And jump!—And yet you look'd so monstrous pleased,
And play'd the simpleton with such a grace,
Taking the tittering for compliment!
I could have box'd you soundly for't. Ten times
Denied I that I knew you.
Wild. Twenty guineas
Were better in the gutter thrown than gone
To fee a dancing-master! [*Aside.*
Con. And you're grown
An amateur in music!—What fine air
Was that you praised last night?—"The Widow Jones!"
A country jig they've turn'd into a song.
You ask'd "if it had come from Italy?"

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The lady blush'd, and held her peace, and then
You blush'd and said, "Perhaps it came from France!"
And then when blush'd the lady more, nor spoke,
You said, "At least it came from Germany!"
The air was English!—a true English air;
A downright English air! A common air,
Old as "When Good King Arthur." Not a square,
Court, alley, street, or lane, about the town,
In which it is not whistled, play'd, or sung!
But you must have it come from Italy,
Or Germany, or France.—Go home! Go home!
To Lincolnshire, and mind thy dog and horn!
You'll never do for town! "The Widow Jones"
To come from Italy! Stay not in town,
Or you'll be married to the Widow Jones,
Since you've foresworn, you say, the Widow Green!
And morn and night they'll din your ears with her!
"Well met, dear Master Wildrake.—A fine day!
Pray, can you tell whence came the Widow Jones?"
They love a jest in town!—To Lincolnshire!
You'll never do for town!—To Lincolnshire;
"The Widow Jones" to come from Italy! [*Goes out.*

Wild. Confound the Widow Jones! 'Tis true!
The air
Well as the huntsman's triple mort I know,
But knew not then indeed, 'twas so disguised
With shakes and flourishes, outlandish things,
That mar, not grace, an honest English song!
Howe'er, the mischief's done! and as for her,
She is either into hate or madness fallen.
If madness, would she had her wits again,
Or I my heart!—If hate—My love's undone;
I'll give her up. I'll e'en to Master Trueworth,
Confess my treason—own my punishment—
Take horse, and back again to Lincolnshire! [*Goes out.*

Con. [*returning.*] Not here! I trust I have not
gone too far!
If he should quit the house! Go out of town!
Poor neighbour Wildrake! Little does he owe me!
From childhood I've been used to plague him thus.
Why would he fall in love, and spoil it all!

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I feel as I could cry! He has no right
To marry any one! What wants he with
A wife? Has he not plague enough in me?
Would he be plagued with any body else?
Ever since I have lived in town I have felt
The want of neighbour Wildrake! Not a soul
Besides I care to quarrel with, and now
He goes and gives himself to another!—What!
Am I in love with neighbour Wildrake?—No.
I only would not have him marry—marry!
Sooner I'd have him dead than have him marry!

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Master Waller's House.*

Enter ALICE, *hastily.*

Alice. [*speaking to the outside.*] Fly, Stephen, to the door! your rapier! quick!—
Our master is beset, because of one
Whose part he takes, a maid, whom lawless men
Would lawlessly entreat! In what a world
We live!—How do I shake!—with what address
[*Looking out of window.*
He lays about him, and his other arm
Engaged, in charge of her whom he defends!
A damsel worth a broil!—Now Stephen, now!
Take off the odds, brave lad, and turn the scale!
I would I were a swordsman! How he makes
His rapier fly!—Well done!—O Heaven, there's blood,
But on the side that's wrong!—Well done, good Stephen!
Pray Heaven no life be ta'en!—Lay on, brave lad!
He has marked his man again! Good lad—Well done,
I pray no mischief come!—Press on him, Stephen!
Now gives he ground—Follow thy advantage up!
Allow no pause for breath!—Hit him again!
Forbid it end in death!—Lounge home, good Stephen!

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How fast he now retreats!—That spring, I'll swear,
Was answer to thy point!—Well fenced!—Well fenced!
Now Heaven forefend it end in death!—He flies!
And from his comrade, the same moment, hath
Our master jerk'd his sword.—The day is ours!
Quick may they get a surgeon for their wounds,
And I, a cordial for my flutter'd spirits:
I vow, I'm nigh to swoon!

Wal. [*without.*]—Hoa! Alice! Hoa!
Open the door! Quick, Alice! Quick!

Alice. Anon!
Young joints do take no thought of aged ones,
But ever think them supple as themselves.

Wal. Alice!

Alice. [*opening the door.*] I'm here! A mercy!—Is she dead?

Enter MASTER WALLER, *bearing* LYDIA, *fainting.*

Wal. No!—She but faints—A chair!—Quick, Alice, quick!
Water to bathe her temples. [ALICE *goes out.*] Such a
Did fortune never do me! Shall I kiss [turn
To life these frozen lips?—No!—Of her plight
'Twere base to take advantage. [ALICE *returns, &c.*]
All is well,
The blood returns.

Alice. How wondrous fair she is!

Wal. Thou think'st her so?—No wonder then should I. [*Aside.*
How say you?—Wondrous fair?

Alice. Yes; wondrous fair!
Harm never come to her! So sweet a thing
'Twere pity were abused!

Wal. You think her fair?

Alice. Ay marry! Half so fair were more than match
For fairest she e'er saw mine eyes before!
And what a form! A foot and instep there!
Vouchers of symmetry! A little foot
And rising instep, from an ankle arching,
A palm, and that a little one, might span.

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Wal. Who taught thee thus?
Alice. Why who, but her, taught thee?
Thy mother!—Heaven rest her!—Thy good mother!
She could read men and women by their hands
And feet!—And here's a hand!—A fairy palm!
Fingers that taper to the pinky tips,
With nails of rose, like shells of such a hue,
Berimm'd with pearl, you pick upon the shore!
Save these the gloss and tint do wear without.
Wal. Why, how thou talk'st!
Alice. Did I not tell thee thus
Thy mother used to talk? Such hand and foot,
She would say, in man or woman vouched for nature
High temper'd!—Soil for sentiment refined;
Affection tender; apprehension quick—
Degrees beyond the generality!
There is a marriage finger! Curse the hand
Would balk it of a ring!
Wal. She's quite restored,
Leave us!—Why cast'st thou that uneasy look?
Why linger'st thou? I'm not alone with her.
My honour's with her too. I would not wrong her.
Alice. And if thou would'st, thou'rt not thy mother's son. [*Goes out.*
Wal. You are better?
Lydia. Much!—Much!
Wal. Know you him who durst
Attempt this violence in open day?
He seem'd as he would force thee to his coach,
I saw attending.
Lydia. Take this letter, sir,
And send the answer—I must needs be gone.
Wal. [*throwing the letter away.*] I read no letter!
Tell me, what of him
I saw offend thee?
Lydia. He hath often met me,
And by design I think, upon the street,
And tried to win mine ear, which ne'er he got
Save only by enforcement. Presents—gifts—
Of jewels and of gold to wild amount,
To win an audience, hath he proffered me;

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Until, methought, my silence—for my lips
Disdain'd reply where question was a wrong—
Had wearied him. O, sir! whate'er of life
Remains to me I had foregone, ere proved
The horror of this hour!—and you it is
That have protected me!
Wal. O speak not on't!
Lydia. You that have saved me from mine enemy—
Wal. I pray you to forget it.
Lydia. From a foe
More dire than he that putteth life in peril—
Wal. Sweet Lydia, I beseech you spare me.
Lydia. No!
I will not spare you.—You have brought me safety,
You whom I fear worse than that baleful foe.
[*Rises to go.*
Wal. [*Kneeling and snatching her hand.*] Lydia!
Lydia. Now, make thy bounty perfect. Drop
My hand. That posture which dishonours thee,
Quit!—for 'tis shame on shame to show respect
Where we do feel disdain. Throw ope thy gate
And let me pass, and never seek with me,
By look, or speech, or aught, communion more!
Wal. Thou said'st thou lovedst me?
Lydia. Yes! when I believed
My tongue did take of thee its last adieu,
And now that I do know it—for be sure
It never bids adieu to thee again—
Again, I tell it thee! Release me, sir!
Rise!—and no hindrance to my will oppose,
That would be free to go.
Wal. I cannot lose thee!
Lydia. Thou canst not have me!
Wal. No!
Lydia. Thou canst not. I
Repeat it.—Yet I'm thine—thine every way,
Except where honour fences!—Honour, sir,
Not property of gentle blood alone;
Of gentle blood not always property.
Thou'lt not obey me. Still enforcest me!
O what a contradiction is a man!

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What in another he one moment spurns,
The next—he does himself complacently! [life?
Wal. Would'st have me lose the hand that holds my
Lydia. Hear me and keep it, if thou art a man!
I love thee—for thy benefit would give
The labour of that hand!—wear out my feet!
Rack the invention of my mind! the powers
Of my heart in one volition gather up!
My life expend, and think no more I gave
Than he who wins a priceless gem for thanks!
For such good-will canst thou return me wrong?
Wal. Yet, for a while, I cannot let thee go.
Propound for me an oath that I'll not wrong thee!
An oath, which, if I break it, doth entail
Forfeit of earth and heaven. I'll take it—so
Thou stay'st one hour with me.
Lydia. No!—Not one moment!
Unhand me, or I shriek!—I know the summons
Will pierce into the street, and set me free!
I stand in peril while I'm near thee! She
Who knows her danger, and delays escape,
Hath but herself to thank, whate'er befals!
Sir, I may have a woman's weakness, but
I have a woman's resolution, too,
And that's a woman's strength! One moment more!—
Wal. Lo! Thou art free to go!
[*Rises, and throws himself distractedly into a chair.*
LYDIA *approaches the door—her pace slackens—she pauses with her hand upon the lock—turns, and looks earnestly on* WALLER.
Lydia. I have a word
To say to thee; if by thy mother's honour
Thou swear'st to me thou wilt not quit thy seat.
Wal. I swear as thou propound'st to me.
Lydia. [*after a pause, bursting into tears.*] O why—
Why have you used me thus? See what you've done?
Essay'd to light a guilty passion up,
And kindled in its stead a holy one!
For I do love thee! Know'st thou not the wish
To find desert doth bring it oft to sight
Where yet it is not? so for substance passes

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What only is a phantasm of our minds!
I fear'd thy love was guilty—yet my wish
To find it honest, stronger than my fear,
My fear with fatal triumph overthrew!
Now hope and fear give up to certainty,
And I must fly thee—yet must love thee still!
Wal. Lydia! by all——
Lydia. I pray you hear me out!
Was't right? was't generous? was't pitiful?
One way or other I might be undone:
To love with sin—or love without a hope!
Wal. Yet hear me, Lydia!——
Lydia. Stop! I'm undone!
A maid without a heart—robb'd of the soil
Wherein life's hopes and wishes root and spring,
And thou the spoiler did me so much hate,
And vow'd me so much love!—but I forgive thee!
Yea, I do bless thee!
[*Rushing up and sinking at his feet.*
Recollect thy oath!—
Or in thy heart lodged never germ of honour,
But 'tis a desert all!
[*She kisses his hand—presses it to her heart, and kisses it again.*
Farewell then to thee! [*Rises.*
May'st thou be happy! [*Going.*
Wal. Would'st ensure the thing
Thou wishest?
[*She moves towards the door with a gesture that prohibits farther converse.*
Stop! [*She continues to move on.*
O sternly résolute! [*She still moves.*
I mean thee honour! [*She stops and turns towards him.*
Thou dost meditate—
I know it—flight. Give me some pause for thought,
But to confirm a mind almost made up.
If in an hour thou hear'st not from me, then
Think me a friend far better lost than won!
Wilt thou do this?
Lydia. I will.
Wal. An hour decides. [*They go out severally.*

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SCENE II.—*A Room in Sir William Fondlove's House.*

Enter WILDRAKE *and* TRUEWORTH.

Wild. You are not angry?
True. No; I knew the service
I sent you on was one of danger.
Wild. Thank you.
Most kind you are—And you believe she loves me;
And your own hopes give up to favour mine.
Was ever known such kindness! Much I fear
'Twill cost you.
True. Never mind! I'll try and bear it.
Wild. That's right. No use in yielding to a thing.
Resolve does wonders. Shun the sight of her—
See other women. Fifty to be found
As fair as she.
True. I doubt it.
Wild. Doubt it not.
Doubt nothing that gives promise of a cure.
Right handsome dames there are in Lancashire,
Whence call'd their women witches!—witching things!
I know a dozen families in which
You'd meet a courtesy worthy of a bow.
I'll give you letters to them.
True. Will you?
Wild. Yes.
True. The worth of a disinterested friend!
Wild. O Master Trueworth, deeply I'm your debtor!
I own I die for love of neighbour Constance!
And thou to give her up for me! Kind friend!
What won't I do for thee!—Don't pine to death;
I'll find thee fifty ways to cure thy passion,
And make thee heart-whole, if thou'rt so resolved.
Thou shalt be master of my sporting stud,
And go a hunting. If that likes thee not,
Take up thy quarters at my shooting lodge;
There is a cellar to't—make free with it.
I'll thank thee if thou emptiest it. The song
Gives out that wine feeds love—it drowns it, man!
If thou wilt neither hunt nor shoot, try games;

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Play at loggats, bowls, fives, dominoes, draughts, crib-
Backgammon—special receipts for love! [bage,
And you believe, for all the hate she shows,
That neighbour Constance loves me?
True. 'Tis my thought.
Wild. How shall I find it out?
True. Affect to love
Another. Say your passion thrives; the day
Is fix'd, and pray her undertake the part
Of bridemaid to your bride. 'Twill bring her out.
Wild. You think she'll own her passion?
True. If she loves.
Wild. I thank thee! I will try it! Master True-
What shall I say to thee, to give her up, [worth,
And love her so?
True. Say nothing.
Wild. Noble friend!
Kind friend! Instruct another man the way
To win thy mistress! thou'lt not break my heart?
Take my advice, thou shalt not be in love
A month! Frequent the play-house!—walk the Parks!
I'll think of fifty ladies that I know,
Yet can't remember now—enchanting ones!
And then there's Lancashire!—and I have friends
In Berkshire and in Wiltshire, that have swarms
Of daughters! Then my shooting lodge and stud!
I'll cure thee in a fortnight of thy love!
And now to neighbour Constance—yet almost
I fear accosting her—a hundred times
Have I essay'd to break my mind to her,
But still she stops my mouth with restless scorn!
Howe'er, thy scheme I'll try, and may it thrive!
For I am sick for love of neighbour Constance.
Farewell, dear Master Trueworth! Take my counsel—
Conquer thy passion! Do so! Be a man! [*Goes out.*
True. Feat easy done that does not tax ourselves!

Enter PHŒBE.

Phœbe. A letter, sir. [*Goes out.*
True. Good sooth, a roaming one!
And yet slow traveller. This should have reached me

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In Lombardy.—The hand! Give way, weak seal,
Thy feeble let too strong for my impatience!
Ha! Wrong'd!—Let me contain myself!—Compell'd
To fly the roof that gave her birth!—My sister!
No partner in her flight but her pure honour!
I am again a brother.—Pillow, board,
I know not till I find her.

Enter WALLER.

Wal. Master Trueworth!

True. Ha! Master Waller! Welcome, Master Waller.

Wal. Good Master Trueworth, thank you. Finding
From home, I e'en made bold to follow you, [you
For I esteem you as a man, and fain
Would benefit by your kind offices.
But let me tell you first, to your reproof,
I am indebted more than e'er I was
To praise of any other. I am come, sir,
To give you evidence I am not one
Who owns advice is right, and acts not on't.

True. Pray you explain.

Wal. Will you the bearer be
Of this to one has cause to thank you, too,
Though I the larger debtor?—Read it, sir.

True. [*reading the letter.*] "At morn to-morrow I will make you mine.
Will you accept from me the name of wife—
The name of husband give me in exchange?"

Wal. How say you, sir?

True. 'Tis boldly—nobly done!

Wal. If she consents—which affectation 'twere
To say I doubt—bid her prepare for church,
And you shall act the father, sir, to her
You did the brother by.

True. Right willingly.
Though matter of high moment I defer,
Mind, heart, and soul, are all enlisted in!

Wal. May I implore you, haste! A time is set!—
How light an act of duty makes the heart!

[*They go out together.*

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SCENE III.—*Another Chamber in Sir William's House.*

CONSTANCE *discovered.*

Con. I'll pine to death for no man! Wise it were,
Indeed, to die for neighbour Wildrake—No!—
I know the duty of a woman better—
What fits a maid of spirit! I am out
Of patience with myself, to cast a thought
Away upon him. Hang him! Lovers cost
Nought but the pains of luring. I'll get fifty,
And break the heart of every one of them!
I will! I'll be the champion of my sex,
And take revenge on shallow, fickle man,
Who gives his heart to fools, and slights the worth
Of proper women! I suppose she's handsome!
My face 'gainst hers, at hazard of mine eyes!
A maid of mind! I'll talk her to a stand,
Or tie my tongue for life! A maid of soul!
An artful, managing, dissembling one!
Or she had never caught him—he's no man
To fall in love himself, or long ago
I warrant he had fall'n in love with me!
I hate the fool—I do. Ha, here he comes.
What brings him hither. Let me dry my eyes;
He must not see I have been crying. Hang him,
I have much to do, indeed, to cry for him!

Enter WILDRAKE.

Wild. Your servant, neighbour Constance.
Con. Servant, sir!
Now what, I wonder, comes the fool to say,
Makes him look so important?
Wild. Neighbour Constance,
I am a happy man.
Con. What makes you so?
Wild. A thriving suit.
Con. In Chancery?

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Wild. Oh, no?
In love.
Con. O, true! You're in love! Go on!
Wild. Well, as I said, my suit's a thriving one.
Con. You mean you are beloved again!—I don't
Believe it.
Wild. I can give you proof.
Con. What proof?
Love-letters? She's a shameless maid
To write them! Can she spell? Ay, I suppose
With prompting of a dictionary!
Wild. Nay,
Without one.
Con. I will lay you ten to one
She cannot spell! How know you she can spell?
You cannot spell yourself! You write command
With a single M——C—O—M—A—N—D:
Yours to Co-mand.
Wild. I did not say she wrote
Love-letters to me.
Con. Then she suffers you to press
Her hand, perhaps?
Wild. She does.
Con. Does she press yours?
Wild. She does.—It goes on swimmingly! [*Aside.*
Con. She does!
She is no modest woman! I'll be bound,
Your arm the madam suffers round her waist?
Wild. She does!
Con. She does! Outrageous forwardness!
Does she let you kiss her?
Wild. Yes.
Con. She should be—
Wild. What?
Con. What you got thrice your share of when at
school,
And yet not half your due! A brazen face!
More could not grant a maid about to wed.
Wild. She is so.
Con. What?

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Wild. How swimmingly it goes! [*Aside.*
Con. [*With suppressed impatience.*] Are you about to marry, neighbour Wildrake?
Are you about to marry?
Wild. Excellent. [*Aside.*
Con. [*Breaking out.*] Why don't you answer me?
Wild. I am.
Con. You are—
I tell you what, sir—You're a fool!
Wild. For what?
Con. You are not fit to marry Do not know
Enough of the world, sir! Have no more experience,
Thought, judgment, than a school-boy! Have no mind,
Of your own—your wife will make a fool of you,
Will jilt you, break your heart. I wish she may,
I do! You have no more business with a wife
Than I have! Do you mean to say indeed
You are about to marry?
Wild. Yes, indeed.
Con. And when?
Wild. I'll say to-morrow! [*Aside.*
Con. When, I say?
Wild. To-morrow.
Con. Thank you: much beholden to you!
You've told me on't in time! I'm very much
Beholden to you, neighbour Wildrake! And,
I pray you, at what hour?
Wild. That we have left
For you to name.
Con. For me!
Wild. For you.
Con. Indeed,
You're very bountiful! I should not wonder
Meant you I should be bridemaid to the lady?
Wild. 'Tis just the thing I mean!
Con. [*Furiously.*] The thing you mean!
Now pray you, neighbour, tell me that again,
And think before you speak; for much I doubt
You know what you are saying. Do you mean
To ask me to be bridemaid?

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Wild. Even so.
Con. Bridemaid?
Wild. Ay, bridemaid!—It is coming fast
Unto a head. [*Aside.*
Con. And 'tis for me you wait
To fix the day? It shall be doomsday then!
Wild. Be doomsday?
Con. Doomsday!
Wild. Wherefore doomsday?
Con. [*Boxes him.*] Wherefore!—
Go ask your bride, and give her that from me.
Look, neighbour Wildrake! you may think this strange,
But don't misconstrue it! For you are vain, sir!
And may put down for love what comes from hate.
I should not wonder, thought you I was jealous;
But I'm not jealous, sir!—would not be so
Where it was worth my while—I pray henceforth
We may be strangers, sir—you will oblige me
By going out of town. I should not like
To meet you on the street, sir. Marry, sir!
Marry to-day! The sooner, sir, the better,
And may you find you have made a bargain, sir.
As for the lady!—much I wish her joy.
I pray you send me no bride-cake, sir!
Nor gloves—If you do, I'll give them to my maid!
Or throw them into the kennel—or the fire.
I am your most obedient servant, sir! [*Goes out.*
Wild. She is a riddle, solve her he who can!
[*Goes out.*

END OF ACT IV.

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ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Sir William Fondlove's.*

SIR WILLIAM *seated with two* Lawyers.

Sir Wil. How many words you take to tell few things
Again, again say over what, said once,
Methinks we're told enough!
First Lawyer. It is the law,
Which labours at precision.
Sir Wil. Yes; and thrives
Upon uncertainty—and makes it, too,
With all its pains to shun it. I could bind
Myself, methinks, with but the twentieth part
Of all this cordage, sirs.—But every man,
As they say, to his own business. You think
The settlement is handsome?
First Lawyer. Very, sir.
Sir Wil. Then now, sirs, we have done, and take my thanks,
Which, with your charges, I will render you
Again to-morrow.
First Lawyer. Happy nuptials, sir!
[Lawyers *go out.*
Sir Wil. Who passes there? Hoa! send my daughter to me,
And Master Wildrake too! I wait for them.
Bold work!—Without her leave to wait upon her,
And ask her go to church!—'Tis taking her
By storm. What else could move her yesterday
But jealousy? What causeth jealousy
But love? She's mine the moment she receives
Conclusive proof like this, that heart and soul,
And mind and person, I am all her own!
Heigh ho! These soft alarms are very sweet,
And yet tormenting too! Ha! Master Wildrake,

Enter WILDRAKE.

I am glad you're ready, for I'm all in arms
To bear the widow off. Come! Don't be sad;

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All must go merrily, you know, to-day!——
She still doth bear him hard, I see! The girl
Affects him not, and Trueworth is at fault,
Though clear it is that he doth die for her. [*Aside.*
Well, daughter—So I see you're ready too.

Enter CONSTANCE.

Why, what's amiss with thee?
Phœbe. [*Entering.*] The coach is here.
Sir Wil. Come, Wildrake, offer her your arm.
Con. [*To* WILDRAKE.] I thank you!
I am not an invalid!—can use my limbs!
He knows not how to make an arm befits
A lady lean upon.
Sir Wil. Why, teach him then.
Con. Teach him! Teach Master Wildrake! Teach, indeed!
I taught my dog to beg, because I knew
That he could learn it.
Sir Wil. Peace, thou little shrew!
I'll have no wrangling on my wedding-day!
Here, take my arm.
Con. I'll not!—I'll walk alone!
Live, die alone! I do abominate
The fool and all his sex!
Sir Wil. Again!
Con. I have done.
When do you marry, Master Wildrake? She
Will want a husband goes to church with thee!
[*They go out.*

SCENE II.—*Widow Green's Dressing-room.*

WIDOW GREEN *discovered at her Toilet, attended by* AMELIA, —WALLER'S *Letter to* LYDIA *in her hand.*

W. Green. O bond of destiny!—Fair bond, that seal'st
My fate in happiness!—I'll read thee yet,
Again—although thou'rt written on my heart.
But here his hand, inditing thee, did lie!
And this the tracing of his fingers! So

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I read thee that could rhyme thee, as my prayers!
" *At morn to-morrow I will make you mine.*
Will you accept from me the name of wife—
The name of husband give me in exchange?"
The traitress! to break ope my billet-doux,
And take the envelope!—But I forgive her,
Since she did leave the rich contents behind.
Amelia, give this feather more a slope,
That it sit droopingly. I would look all
Dissolvement, nought about me to bespeak
Boldness! I would appear a timid bride,
Trembling upon the verge of wifehood, as
I ne'er before had stood there! That will do.
Oh dear!—how I am agitated—don't
I look so? I have found a secret out,—
Nothing in women strikes a man so much
As to look interesting! Hang this cheek
Of mine! It is too saucy; what a pity
To have a colour of one's own!—Amelia!
Could you contrive, dear girl, to bleach my cheek,
How I would thank you! I could give it then
What tint I chose, and that should be the hectic
Bespeaks a heart in delicate commotion.
I am much too florid! Stick a rose in my hair,
The brightest you can find, 'twill help, my girl,
Subdue my rebel colour—Nay, the rose
Doth lose complexion, not my cheek! Exchange it
For a carnation. That's the flower, Amelia!
You see how it doth triumph o'er my cheek.
Are you content with me?

Amelia. I am, my lady.

W. Green. And whither, think you, has the hussy gone,
Whose place you fill so well?—Into the country?
Or fancy you she stops in town!

Amelia. I can't
Conjecture.

W. Green. Shame upon her!—Leave her place
Without a moment's warning—with a man too!
Seem'd he a gentleman that took her hence?

Amelia. He did.

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W. Green. You never saw him here before?
Amelia. Never.
W. Green. Not lounging on the other side
Of the street, and reconnoitering the windows?
Amelia. Never.
W. Green. 'Twas plann'd by letter. Notes, you know,
Have often come to her—But I forgive her,
Since this advice she chanced to leave behind
Of gentle Master Waller's wishes, which
I bless myself in blessing!—Gods, a knock!
'Tis he! Show in those ladies are so kind
To act my bridemaids for me on this brief
And agitating notice. [AMELIA *goes out.*] Yes, I look
A bride sufficiently! And this the hand
That gives away my liberty again.
Upon my life it is a pretty hand,
A delicate and sentimental hand!
No lotion equals gloves; no woman knows
The use of them that does not sleep in them!
My neck hath kept its colour wondrously!
Well; after all it is no miracle
That I should win the heart of a young man.
My bridemaids come, oh dear!

Enter two Ladies.

First Lady. How do you? A good morning to you
—Poor dear,
How much you are affected! Why we thought
You ne'er would summon us.
W. Green. One takes, you know,
When one is flurried, twice the time to dress.
My dears, has either of you salts? I thank you!
They are excellent; the virtue's gone from mine,
Nor thought I of renewing them.—Indeed,
I'm unprovided quite for this affair.
First Lady. I think the bridegroom's come!
W. Green. Don't say so! How
You've made my heart jump!
First Lady. As you sent for us,
A new-launch'd carriage drove up to the door;
The servants all in favours.

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W. Green. 'Pon my life,
I never shall get through it; lend me your hand.
[*Half rises, and throws herself back on her chair again.*
I must sit down again! There came just now
A feeling like to swooning over me.
I am sure before 'tis over I shall make
A fool of myself! I vow I thought not half
So much of my first wedding-day! I'll make
An effort. Let me lean upon your arm,
And give me yours, my dear. Amelia, mind
Keep near me with the smelling-bottle.
Servant. [*Entering.*] Madam,
The bridegroom's come. [*Goes out.*
W. Green. The brute has knock'd me down!
To bolt it out so! I had started less
If he had fired a cannon at my ear.
How shall I ever manage to hold up
Till all is done! I'm tremor, head to foot.
You can excuse me, can't you?—Pity me!
One may feel queer upon one's wedding-day.
[*They go out.*

SCENE THE LAST.—*A Drawing-Room.*

Enter Servants, showing in Sir William Fondlove, Constance, *and* Master Wildrake—*Servants go out again.*

Sir Wil. [*Aside to* Wildrake.] Good Master Wildrake, look more cheerfully!—Come,
You do not honour to my wedding-day.
How brisk am I! My body moves on springs!
My stature gives no inch I throw away;
My supple joints play free and sportfully;
I'm every atom what a man should be.
Wild. I pray you pardon me, Sir William!
Sir. Wil. Smile, then,
And talk, and rally me! I did expect,
Ere half an hour had pass'd, you would have put me

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A dozen times to the blush. Without such things,
A bridegroom knows not his own wedding-day.
I see! Her looks are glossary to thine,
She flouts thee still, I marvel not at thee;
There's thunder in that cloud! I would to-day
It would disperse, and gather in the morning.
I fear me much thou know'st not how to woo.
I'll give thee a lesson. Ever there's a way,
But knows one how to take it! Twenty men
Have courted Widow Green. Who has her now?
I sent to advertise her that to-day
I meant to marry her. She wouldn't open
My note. And gave I up? I took the way
To make her love me! I did send again
To pray her leave my daughter should be bridemaid.
That letter too came back. Did I give up?
I took the way to make her love me! Yet
Again I sent to ask what church she chose
To marry at; my note came back again;
And did I yet give up? I took the way
To make her love me. All the while I found
She was preparing for the wedding. Take
A hint from me! She comes! My fluttering heart
Gives note the empress of its realms is near.
Now, Master Wildrake, mark and learn from me
How it behoves a bridegroom play his part.

Enter WIDOW GREEN, *supported by her Bridemaids, and followed by* AMELIA.

W. Green. I cannot raise my eyes—they cannot bear
The beams of his, which, like the sun's, I feel
Are on me, though I see them not enlightening
The heaven of his young face; nor dare I scan
The brightness of his form, which symmetry
And youth and beauty in enriching vie.
He kneels to me! Now grows my breathing thick,
As though I did await a seraph's voice,
Too rich for mortal ear.

Sir Wil. My gentle bride!

W. Green. Who's that? who speaks to me?

Sir Wil. These transports check.

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Lo, an example to mankind I set
Of amorous emprise; and who should thrive
In love if not Love's soldier, who doth press
The doubtful siege, and will not own repulse.
Lo! here I tender thee my fealty,
To live thy duteous slave. My queen thou art,
In frowns or smiles, to give me life or death.
Oh, deign look down upon me! In thy face
Alone I look on day; it is my sun
Most bright; the which denied, no sun doth rise.
Shine out upon me, my divinity!
My gentle Widow Green! My wife to be;
My love, my life, my drooping, blushing bride!
W. Green. Sir William Fondlove, you're a fool!
Sir Wil. A fool?
W. Green. Why come you hither, sir, in trim like this?
Or rather why at all?
Sir Wil. Why come I hither?
To marry thee!
W. Green. The man will drive me mad!
Sir William Fondlove, I'm but forty, sir,
And you are sixty, seventy, if a day;
At least you look it, sir. I marry you!
When did a woman wed her grandfather?
Sir Wil. Her brain is turn'd!
W. Green. You're in your dotage, sir,
And yet a boy in vanity! But know
Yourself from me: you are old and ugly, sir.
Sir Wil. Do you deny you are in love with me?
W. Green. In love with thee!
Sir Wil. That you are jealous of me?
W. Green. Jealous!
Sir Wil. To very lunacy!
W. Green. To hear him!
Sir Wil. Do you forget what happen'd yesterday?
W. Green. Sir William Fondlove!—
Sir Wil. Widow Green, fair play!—
Are you not laughing? Is it not a jest?
Do you believe me seventy to a day?
Do I look it? Am I old and ugly? Why,
Why do I see those favours in the hall,

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These ladies dress'd as bridemaids, thee as bride,
Unless to marry me? [*Knock.*
W. Green. He is coming, sir,
Shall answer you for me!

Enter WALLER, *with Gentlemen as Bridemen.*

Wal. Where is she? What!
All that bespeaks the day, except the fair
That's queen of it? Most kind of you to grace
My nuptials so! But that I render you
My thanks in full, make full my happiness,
And tell me where's my bride?
W. Green. She's here.
Wal. Where?
W. Green. Here,
Fair Master Waller!
Wal. Lady, do not mock me.
W. Green. Mock thee! My heart is stranger to such mood,
'Tis serious tenderness and duty all.
I pray you mock not me, for I do strive
With fears and soft emotions, that require
Support. Take not away my little strength,
And leave me at the mercy of a feather.
I am thy bride! If 'tis thy happiness
To think me so, believe it, and be rich
To thy most boundless wishes! Master Waller,
I am thy waiting bride, the Widow Green!
Wal. Lady, no widow is the bride I seek,
But one the church has never given yet
The nuptial blessing to!
W. Green. What mean you, sir?
Why come a bridegroom here, if not to me
You sued to be your bride? Is this your hand, sir?
[*Showing letter.*
Wal. It is! address'd to your fair waiting-maid.
W. Green. My waiting-maid! The laugh is passing round,
And now the turn is yours, sir. She is gone!
Eloped! run off! and with the gentleman
That brought your billet-doux.

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Wal. Is Trueworth false ?
He must be false. What madness tempted me
To trust him with such audience as I knew
Must sense, and mind, and soul of man entrance,
And leave him but the power to feel its spell !
Of his own lesson he would profit take,
And plead at once an honourable love,
Supplanting mine, less pure, reformed too late !
And if he did, what merit I, except
To lose the maid I would have wrongly won,
And, had I rightly prized her, now had worn !
I get but my deservings !

Enter TRUEWORTH, *leading in* LYDIA, *richly dressed, and veiled from head to foot.*

Master Trueworth,
Though for thy treachery thou hast excuse,
Thou must account for it, so much I lose !
Sir, you have wrong'd me to amount beyond
Acres, and gold, and life, which makes them rich.
And compensation I demand of you,
Such as a man expects, and none but one
That's less than man refuses ! Where's the maid
You falsely did abstract?
True. I took her hence,
But not by guile, nor yet enforcement, sir,
But of her free will, knowing what she did.
That, as I found I cannot give her back,
I own her state is changed, but in her place
This maid I offer you, her image far
As feature, form, complexion, nature go !
Resemblance halting only there, where thou
Thyself didst pause, condition, for this maid
Is gently born and generously bred.
Lo ! for your fair loss, fair equivalent !
Wal. Show me another sun, another earth
I can inhabit, as this Sun and Earth ;
As thou didst take the maid, the maid herself
Give back ! herself, her sole equivalent !
True. Her sole equivalent I offer you !
My sister, sir, long counted lost, now found,

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Who fled her home unwelcome bands to 'scape
Which a half-father would have forced upon her,
Taking advantage of her brother's absence
Away on travel in a distant land!
Return'd, I miss'd her; of the cause received
Invention, coward, false and criminating!
And gave her up for lost, but happily
Did find her yesterday—Behold her, sir!
[*Removes veil.*

Wal. Lydia!

W. Green. My waiting-maid!

Wal. Thy sister, Trueworth!
Art thou fit brother to this virtuous maid?

True. [*Giving* LYDIA *to* WALLER.] Let this assure thee.

Lydia. [*To* WIDOW GREEN.] Madam, pardon me
My double character, for honesty,
No other end assumed—and my concealment
Of Master Waller's love. In all things else
I trust I may believe you hold me blameless;
At least, I'll say for you I should be so,
For it was pastime, madam, not a task
To wait upon you! Little you exacted,
And ever made the most of what I did
In mere obedience to you.

W. Green. Give me your hand;
No love without a little roguery.
If you do play the mistress well as maid,
You will bear off the bell! There never was
A better girl!——I have made myself a fool.
I am undone, if goes the news abroad.
My wedding dress I donn'd for no effect
Except to put it off! I must be married.
I'm a lost woman, if another day
I go without a husband!—What a sight
He looks by Master Waller!—Yet he is physic
I die without, so needs must gulp it down.
I'll swallow him with what good grace I can,
Sir William Fondlove!

Sir Wil. Widow Green!

W. Green. I own

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I have been rude to you. Thou dost not look
So old by thirty, forty, years as I
Did say. Thou'rt far from ugly—very far!
And as I said, Sir William, once before,
Thou art a kind and right good-humour'd man:
I was but angry with you! Why, I'll tell you
At more convenient season—and you know
An angry woman heeds not what she says,
And will say anything!
Sir Wil. I were unworthy
The name of man, if an apology
So gracious came off profitless, and from
A lady! Will you take me, Widow Green?
W. Green. Hem! [*Courtesies.*
True. [*To* WILDRAKE.] Master Wildrake dress'd to go to church!
She has acknowledged, then, she loves thee?—No?
Give me thy hand, I'll lead thee up to her.
Wild. 'Sdeath! what are you about? You know her not.
She'll brain thee!
True. Fear not: come along with me.
Fair Mistress Constance!
Con. Well, sir!
Wild. [*To* TRUEWORTH.] Mind!
True. Don't fear.
Love you not neighbour Wildrake?
Con. Love, sir!
True. Yes,
You do.
Con. He loves another, sir, he does!
I hate him. We were children, sir, together
For fifteen years and more; there never came
The day we did not quarrel, make it up,
Quarrel again, and make it up again:
Were never neighbours more like neighbours, sir.
Since he became a man, and I a woman,
It still has been the same; nor cared I ever
To give a frown to any other, sir.
And now to come and tell me he's in love,
And ask me to be bridemaid to his bride!

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How durst he do it, sir!—to fall in love!
Methinks at least he might have ask'd my leave,
Nor had I wonder'd had he ask'd myself, sir!
Wild. Then give thyself to me!
Con. How! what!
Wild. Be mine,
Thou art the only maid thy neighbour loves.
Con. Art serious, neighbour Wildrake?
Wild. In the church
I'll answer thee, if thou wilt take me; though
I neither dress, nor walk, nor dance, nor know
"The Widow Jones" from an Italian, French,
Or German air.
Con. No more of that.—My hand.
Wild. Givest it as free as thou didst yesterday?
Con. [*Affecting to strike him.*] Nay!
Wild. I will thank it, give it how thou wilt.
W. Green. A triple wedding! May the Widow Green
Obtain brief hearing e'er she quits the scene,
The Love-Chase to your kindness to commend
In favour of an old, now absent, friend!

END OF THE LOVE-CHASE.

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WOMAN'S WIT;

OR,

Love's Disguises.

A PLAY.

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TO

SAMUEL ROGERS,

This Play

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

Hosted by Google

CHARACTERS.

(AS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED AT COVENT GARDEN IN 1838.)

Lord Athunree	MR. WARDE.
Sir Valentine de Grey	MR. ANDERSON.
Sir William Sutton	MR. BARTLEY.
Walsingham	MR. MACREADY.
Bradford	MR. WALDRON.
Felton	MR. PRITCHARD.
Monsieur de l'Epée	MR. TILBURY.
Clever	MR. HARLEY.
Lewson	MR. DIDDEAR.
Sir William Sutton's Servant	MR. HOLMES.
Sir Valentine's Servant	MR. COLLET.
Officer	MR. C. J. SMITH.
Eustace	MISS TAYLOR.
Hero	MISS H. FAUCIT.
Emily	MRS. SERLE.

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WOMAN'S WIT;

OR,

LOVE'S DISGUISES.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Sir William Sutton's House.—An Ante-room leading to a Ball-room.—Music as of a Ball.—Dancers seen in the further Apartment.—Visitors passing in and out.*

Enter from the Ball-room, WALSINGHAM *and* BRADFORD.

Wal. Fair revels these Sir William Sutton holds,
And all in honour of the city maid!
Sure the whole town is here, such swarms pass in
And out. Is it a match, as they report,
Betwixt the maid and brave Sir Valentine?

Brad. In prospect, sir; but yet I question much,
If in a year hence, nearer than to-day.
She of the spirit of conquest is possess'd
Incontinently: victory but serves
To whet the lust of triumph. Strange so long
Lord Athunree did occupy her: but
His station ceased, soon as Sir Valentine
Aspired to fill his place. A grief it is,
A maid with treasure past compare like hers
Of gorgeous beauty, with a mine of wealth,
Should use her riches with such huswifery,
As makes one pity her possession of them!

Wal. Lo you, she dances, and, for partner, takes

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Lord Athunree, and not Sir Valentine.
A novel measure that! know you its name?
Brad. No!—ay!—a liberal measure!—See!—his hand
Doth hold possession of her waist; while hers,
Nothing repelling, on his shoulder rests,
Permitting neighbourhood so close, embrace
Were scarce in privilege a jot before.
Wal. You know Lord Athunree?—his character?
The limits of my acquaintance.
Brad. No, sir.
Wal. Sir,
He is a libertine. He hath been much
Abroad. That dance, I will be bound, is ware
Of his importing. Yes; a libertine!
A man of pleasure—in the animal
Ignoble sense of the term—that owns no curb
Of honour, generosity, or ruth;
Nor hath a single grace, except the nerve—
A contradiction which would make one question
That valour is of itself a thing to boast of—
To vouch the wrong he does, and stand by it!
Brad. You say this feelingly.
Wal. Because I feel it.
I had a friend, whose heart could scarce lodge weal
Or woe, without the privity of mine—
A friend of quick affections—and a villain
Compass'd the ruin of the maid he loved.
That villain was the lord, who dances there.
They fought—through odds in skill, the honest arm
Was master'd by the foul; but vengeance, though
'Tis baffled, is not lost! Good morning, for
More than an hour or twain, 'tis past the turn
Of night.—Free thanks for your free converse with
A stranger.
Brad. Sir, the like I render you:
But will you not delay some moments more?
In spirit, yet the revels are but young!
Wal. Sir, I am pall'd with them—and were I not,
That lord approaches, and the sight of him
Would put out keenest zest of joyance.

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Brad. Have with you, then; far as our road is one,
We'll go together.
Wal. Sir, right willingly! [*They go out.*

Enter LORD ATHUNREE *and* FELTON.

Ath. 'Tis not for him, by sheer effrontery,
For two years I have held the foremost place
'Mongst swarms of lovers close besieging her!
Made one and all to stand aloof, whene'er
I thought they press'd too near!
Fel. I have marvell'd oft
At your success.
Ath. Of blood-letting, you know,
In the high mode, I have as little fear,
As need of fear; and would they come to that,
I soon convinced them, that I knew their art
Better than they did.
Fel. To say the truth, the foil
Has stood you much in stead, when there was need
Of weapon of graver practice.—Found you ever
Your equal in the fence?
Ath. Ay; and my master!
And therein do I tax my lucky stars,
That watch not o'er me now. He is here in the house,
That gentleman from travel late arrived,
Who, with the gloss of the fair countries which
He has been seeing, shines, and quite puts out
All light of homely worth.
Fel. Sir Valentine?
Ath. The same;
That knight of France, though son of England. Ay,
And would-be-captain too, to Venus, sir!
Would take the fortress, all who'd carry which,
I at impracticable distance still
Have kept—yet come no nearer than I was
To winning it, when first set down before it.
Fel. Fear'st thou surrender then to him?
Ath. Humph! Fear?
That "fear" 's an ugly word! "Do I fear?" He is
quick!
His point and eye do go together! Scarce

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You are mark'd, you are hit! his sword is part of him,
Grows to his hand, sir, as his hand to his wrist;
The very moment that your weapons touch,
He is here, and there, and in!—his lounge, a shot
You see not till 'tis home! We quarrell'd once,
And twice I felt him, ere a man could say
That he was well *en garde*—but touches, yet
Forerunners sure of heavier payment—so
I gave the battle up!—Yes, I do fear—
Save I have hit him, as I think I have,
Where useless lounge or parry!

Fel. Hit him! How?

Ath. I' the brain and heart, sir, without damage of
The skin! Through the eyes, sir, that take hit and hit
And ne'er the worse, howe'er the practice tells
Within! He is a man of sentiment!
Sentiment, mark you! that is, flesh and blood
I' the summer cool as spring—or water, sir,
At the boiling point without a bubble—or wood
Without ignition in the heart of fire!
An ample span of forehead!—Mark!—a full
And liquid eye—free nostrils—crimson lips,
Cushioning one another without stint
Of the velvet—and a chin could show a copse
Of beard—a man, sir, with all these, and yet
With wishes innocent as thoughts of babes!
A lie, sir, on the face of it!—yet such
He passes for unto himself—believes
Indeed he is, and doth of others judge
But through the colour of this self-delusion—
Particularly women. He would have them
Earth to himself—to all else, things of heaven!
Impassive to impression, as the air
Which man ne'er yet gave form or colour to!

Fel. Well?

Ath. I did dance with her just now.

Fel. Fair Hero?

Ath. Yes; I did dance with her a free
And liberal dance—the dance of contact, else
Forbid—abandoning to the free hand
The sacred waist! while face to face, till breath

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Doth kiss with breath, and eye embraceth eye.
Your transed coil relaxing, straightening, round
And round in wavy measure, you entwine
Circle with circle, till the swimming brain
And panting heart in swoony lapse give o'er!
Fel. I know; that foreign dance thou didst bring home.
Ath. The very same; I taught it her, and first
Did dance with her to-night.
Fel. I had admired
To see you.
Ath. Had you not, I had admired.
The card-room kept you. Give you joy—you won!
But to the dance. The evening half was out
And still he held her ear.
Fel. Sir Valentine?
Ath. Who else? who else that seat pre-eminent
By her fair side had held in spite of me.
I watch'd for my occasion, and it came;
Some friend did crave a moment's audience; ere
'Twas done, her waist was in my custody;
Her white arm hanging from my shoulder, where
Her hand did freely couch. "Your game goes well!"
I whisper'd her; "Play boldly, and 'tis yours:
The measure this to set the outline off!
Give sway to thy rich figure! Abandon thee
To the spirit of the dance! Let it possess thee!
Float thee as air were footing for thee! stud
Thy cheeks with smiles of fire, and give thine eye
The lightning's dazzling play! fix them on mine,
That each do feed the other's, like to tongues
With converse waking converse!"
Fel. Well?—I see
Thy drift!
Ath. Thou shouldst have seen the issue on't—
While, like a pupil at a task he loves,
Whose aptitude with eager will outstrips
His master's bidding, she was twenty times
The thing I wish'd her! How she rose and sank
With springy instep, while her yielding waist—
Well as her waving neck, her beauteous head—

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Did show her fair and falling shoulders off!
A world she look'd and moved of passionate
Quick sense—of loveliness and joyousness —
And I, be sure, did show its reigning lord!
Nor with the measure did dominion cease;
But when her drooping lids, relaxed steps,
Disparted lips, and colour vanishing,
Gave note she must give o'er—her languid form,
Close girdled by my arm, her hand in mine,
Her cheek for pillow on my shoulder laid,
I led her to a couch, where courtesy
Of course admitted tendance!

Fel. What of him?

Ath. He is mad! When he did turn, and note us first,
He look'd as one who question'd his own eyes;
Then stood awhile, no doubt admiring how
Step did keep time with step, and how we moved
In closest neighbourhood, disparting but
To meet—her arm, a link ne'er letting go!
Then with a start of sudden fury went,
And cast him on a seat with folded arms,
And knitted brows scanning us, as he wish'd
His eyes could do the office of the lightning.
I cared to mark no more—I saw the storm
I wish'd would come, was on; and knew 'twould hold!

Fel. And does it?

Ath. Yes; thrice she advances made—
As women know to make, and not to seem,
Except to practised eyes—to draw his notice:
Dropp'd her glove near him—wish'd she had a chair,
And one at his hand—complain'd of thirst, and just
A salver brought to him with wine—and all
In vain. Right in his eyes display'd her form
In attitude of tender languishment—
And to no more account than offerings
Of gems before an idol made of stone!
But see; we have danced out the night; and day
With fresh and flushy vigour cometh on;
You hear the rout breaks up. Attend him home,
Obtain his ear; know nothing, but be sure

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Of slightest opportunity he gives
For her disparagement to take advantage.
Here comes the Queen of the night, and all forlorn,
As she had lost her throne!

Enter HERO, *leaning upon* EMILY.

Emily. What miss you, Hero,
That thus you pause and turn; go on again,
And pause and turn again? Fear'st anything
Thou hast forgot?

Hero. No! I have danced too much
To-night. The night before it was the same!
No rest—all revels!—Madness, with a frame
That is anything but iron. [*Turns to look back.*

Emily. There again!
I am sure there's something you do miss—What is it?

Hero. My spirits only! Are not yours nigh wasted?
[*Turns again.*

Ath. [*Aside to* FELTON.] She waits for him—he saw her home last night.
My life on't she must look for other squire.

Emily. Come.

Hero. Are they dancing yet?

Emily. What do you hear,
To make you ask? You're dreaming! Saw you not
That the musicians left the room before us,
And scarce a dozen laggards did remain
Besides ourselves?

Hero. I know not what I saw,
I am tired—heart-tired—too tired to move or rest—
A weariness, won't let me go or stay!

Ath. He comes—accost him—ask him of the ball.
[*Aside to* FELTON.

Enter SIR VALENTINE.

Fel. See I Sir Valentine the last of all
The revellers?

Sir Val. You see him, sir; 'tis e'en
Sir Valentine.

Fel. Liked you the ball to-night?

Sir Val. Yes!—No!

Fel. What! Liked it, and disliked it?

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Sir Val. Yes!
Fel. It was a very handsome ball.
Sir Val. It was.
Fel. What was amiss, then? Was the music bad?
Sir Val. The music far from bad! Most excellent!
Incomparably good—it were in place
In a concert room,—I find no fault with the music.
Fel. Are you not fond of dancing, then?
Sir Val. I am—
Innocent pastime taken innocently
In honest mood!—But there are natures, sir,
That should eschew it—which 'tis pernicious to—
As wine, that's mirth to some, to some is madness!
I find no fault with dancing! 'Tis an act
Sets beauty off, proportion, grace; when these
Are too set off by modesty. For men,
And women more especially, of the vein
That's opposite, I'd have them lookers on—
For their own sakes first—next for the sake of those,
Who what they'd blush to do, do grieve to see
Enacted.
Fel. Was there any dance to-night
Offended you?
Sir Val. N—o, sir—I cannot say—
Perhaps there is no harm in any dance.
I am not sure—Some may give too much licence—
Yet not so much, but e'en in such a case
By delicacy 'twill be carried off
Becomingly. I might perhaps object—
Yet where's the thing that can defy objection?
But this I say, sir, and I'll stand to it
That modesty being to woman more
Than beauty—for, without, is beauty cheap—
That woman, who doth show her beauty off
Before her modesty, forgets herself,
And merits forfeit of that high respect,
Which noble minds would bear her!
Hero. [*To* EMILY.] What lady, can you tell me, danced to-night
As lady should not dance?
Emily. I do not know.

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Hero. [*to* FELTON]. Do you, sir?
Fel. No!
Hero [*to* LORD ATHUNREE]. My lord, do you?
Ath. No, lady.
Hero. Perhaps some lady whom the gentleman
Himself did dance with, and none other noted—
Sir Val. No lady, madam, that did dance with me.
Who yields to me her hand shall ne'er forget
Herself—at least by my o'erstepping. She
Shall find I know the honour that she does me;
See in the freedom of the frolic measure
My reverence for her sex attending her;
And then be handed to her seat again,
For mine own credit sake if not for hers,
By all approved, as gracefully come off
In partnery of honest joyance!
No lady, madam, that did dance with me.
Ath. The plague repay him for the lesson he
So freely reads me—in her presence too!
Hero. Wilt please you name the lady gave offence?
Sir Val. 'Twere a presumptuous act for my poor tongue.
But if you know her, you must know her beauty,
Wherein I ne'er met fair to liken to her,
And that more fittingly shall name her for me.
A noble stature stopping there, where sex
Would have it reach, and bid it go no farther;
A head of antique mould, magnificent
As may consist with softness and with sweetness;
Features, advertisement of thoughts and moods,
Wishes and fancies, such as it beseems
To lodge with chastity and tenderness
In sumptuous palace of rich loveliness;
And limbs of mould and act therewith consorting,
Making a paragon of symmetry!—
Gods, to such homeliness of use perverted,
As properties, to them were homeliness,
Should spurn to be applied to!
Emily. Are you ill,
That you turn pale?
Hero. Ill!—What should make me ill?
I could be angry, were it worth my while,

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At such disparagement of one, it seems
Is known to me,—but calumny is a thing
Defeats itself, and I should be despised
Did I pay heed to!
Sir Val. Lady, you are right;
It shall be calumny—it should be so!
Vouchers so fair, should never be forsworn.
Alas for him, who is incredulous,
Yet would believe them rather far than doubt them!
[SIR VALENTINE *goes out, followed by* FELTON.
Hero. A most strange gentleman!—an oddity!
I took him for a man of sense,—didn't you?
A fanciful and churlish gentleman!
Looks sour because another man looks pleased!
Lord Athunree, wilt see my carriage brought
Close to the door before I venture out,
If not to tax your gallantry too much?
Ath. I fly to do it. [*Goes out.*
Hero. Let me weep a moment
Upon your neck—There! I am better now.
Are my eyes red?
Emily. Not much.
Hero. I will appear
To have been laughing! Laughter bringeth tears.
Most excellent!—you should have kept it though
For another time! I have not strength to laugh!
As 'tis, I am so weak, I laugh and cry.

Re-enter ATHUNREE.

Lord Athunree, your courtesy has lost you
A most facetious story!
Ath. Tell it me.
Hero. Tell it you! Tell it! I am dead already
With hearing it, and must not hear't again,
Would I go home to-night! A little plague,
To make me laugh, and know that I should cry,
For lack of very strength.—Come, let us go!
A charming ball! Fair night—most happy night!
I'll find a time to make *you* cry with laughing. [*To* EMILY.
A charming night—a very charming night. [*They go out.*

END OF ACT I.

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ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the House of Monsieur de l'Epée.*

Enter, from an inner Room, WALSINGHAM *and* MONSIEUR DE L'EPEE.

De l'Epée. Your progress answers to your practice, sir;
Cause have you none for discontent. Confess,
You play the foil with twice the ease you did
A month ago. Might I be credited,
Not only each new week, but even day,
Puts to the blush the former one, so fast
You catch the mystery of the fair art.

Wal. Yes; but my fellow-pupil heads me still.

De l'Epée. His quickness is your master.

Wal. Yet, 'tis strange!
With all my pains, I toil behind him still,
And he a very stripling!

De l'Epée. 'Tis not strength
That makes the odds, but art. To turn the foil
In practised hand, almost a wheaten straw
Hath stamina enough. The point deceived,
An infant's arm in distance lounges home;
The art is strength, and length, and everything.

Wal. To say the truth, it is a noble art,
On which agility and grace attend,
With proper manhood keeping company,
As on none other;—making lightest ease
To champion force, and, as you say, bear off
The palm from it. In every act and state—
Salute, guard, parry, feint or pass—it hath
A bearing worthy of the eyes of kings
And their high consorts, when a practised hand
Like yours takes up the foil.

De l'Epée. You flatter, sir!

Wal. By my proud honour, no! But, to your pupil—
What is he?

De l'Epée. I know not.

Wal. He is very young.

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De l'Epée. Yes; by his looks he has a teen or twain
To count;—though never scholar study plied
With manlier resolve and constancy.
It often moves my wonder, that so slight
And delicate a frame should undergo
What to robuster mould a thousand times
I have mark'd was weariness. Scarce lays he down
The foil, before he takes it up again,
Some parry, feint or lounge, unmastered yet,
To practise;—which he does with zest so keen,
I have thought, at times, that in his fancy's eye
There stood before his point an enemy,
The actor of some unatoned wrong,
Whose heart each thrust was meant for.—A good
I am waited for. [morning!

Wal. Good morning to you, sir. [DE L'EPEE *goes out.*
A noble fellow that!—a soldier who
A mighty captain follow'd, for the strides
With which he led to glory—nay, for them
Deserted not, when fortune back'd a world,
Marshall'd against her off-cast favourite!
Talk you of scars?—that Frenchman bears on crown,
Body and limb, his vouchers palpable,
For many a thicket he has struggled through
Of briery danger—wondering that he
Came off with even life, when right and left
His mates dropp'd thick beside him. A true man!
His rations with his master gone—for he
Was honour's soldier, that ne'er changes sides—
He left his country for a foreign one,
To teach his gallant art, and earn a home.
I know him to be honest, generous,
High-soul'd, and modest; every way a grace
To the fine martial nation whence he sprang *!

EUSTACE *enters from Inner Room.*

My fellow-pupil! [*Aside.*] That was a shrewd guess
The Frenchman made. Are all these pains to pay

* This is a portrait. My brothers of Glasgow know and honour the gallant man who suggested it, and will judge how far it is a faithful one. At all events it is not flattered.

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An enemy?—then is his case my own.
Would I could gain his confidence! but still,
Oft as I try, he foils me with reserve
He shows to none beside! One more attempt.—
So, fellow-pupil! You have given o'er at last.
Right well you fenced to-day! you are weary?
Eust. No. Good morning, sir.
Wal. I' faith, you "sir" not me:
We have been mates too long, methinks, for term
So niggard, fellow-pupil!—Walsingham
Is my name. I prithee, when thou next accost'st me,
Say Walsingham. Is't not enough, your foil
Keeps me at distance—will not let me in—
Rebukes me, shames me—will you with your tongue
O'erbear me too? Call me not "sir," I pray,
But Walsingham.
Eust. It were to make too free
For mere acquaintanceship.
Wal. Acquaintanceship!
You have known me for a year. Friendship hath grown
In half that time.
Eust. Friendship grows not by time.
Wal. In sooth 'twould seem so. Daily have we met
For good a year—nor yet have shaken hands.
Give me thy hand, and let us hence be friends!
What! will you not? I'faith, you should—you shall!
I'll take it spite of you—yea, though you frown,
And call yourself my foe, which would be hard
To make a foe, striving to make a friend.
Eust. [*After a pause.*] I'll shake hands with you.
Wal. Ha!—a hearty grasp!
But take it not away so soon again,
Nor where you give your hand, refuse your eye.
Why don't you look at me?
Eust. Let go my hand!
Wal. Such haste to take away—so frank to give?
Eust. Let go my hand!—Well, you may keep it, sir;
You cannot make it like its prison, nor,
When once 'tis free from't, enter it again.
Wal. Well—call me Walsingham, I'll let it go.
Why must I force you thus to be my friend?

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Eust. Why should you? Force made never yet a friend.

Wal. For kindness, then! why should you hold me off?
A man repell'd of fortune! See you not,
I am not of the vein of those on whom
Her smiles she lavishes—nor do I think
With surfeit of such sweet you bought that cast
Of thoughtfulness, which when I look upon you,
Like to my glass, shows me, methinks, myself!—
I am a man of honour and of heart.
Ah, too much heart! Come, call me Walsingham,
And then I'll let you go.

Eust. Well—Walsingham!

Wal. I' faith, most kindly did you sound my name;
Tongue never fell it yet more sweetly from,
Save one!—Save one!

Eust. Farewell!

Wal. We'll walk together.

Eust. Nay.

Wal. Will you have it so? why have it so;
My love is not that sturdy beggar yet,
But spurning may suffice to stop its craving!
Yet ere you leave me, hear me—and then go.
Methinks our fates in something are alike;
To prove it so, or not, I'll tell thee mine.
Give thee my confidence—make thee indeed my friend!
Now, once for all, what say you?

Eust. Be it so.

Wal. Thy hand again, then!—Do we go together?

Eust. We do!—Have with you!

Wal. Now we are friends for ever! [*They go out.*

SCENE II.—*A Room in Hero's Town House.*

Enter SIR WILLIAM *and* EMILY.

Sir Wil. At sea again! Blown ever from the port
We'd have her harbour in, by her wild fancies,
And far from land as ever! I did hope
This suitor had been anchorage had held her.

Emily. And so did I; she'll ne'er be held by suitor,

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Long as there bows another—save it be
By a miracle. I say it, though I love her.
Sir W. And yet that lord hath held her.
Emily. So he hath,
By dint of mere audacity—some art
He owns makes other suitors quail, and she,
For vanity, hath still affected him,
As proud to have a vassal in a man
To whom his fellows bow.
Sir Wil. I am glad so slight
His power. I know him for a profligate,
With broken coffers, to replenish which
He merely follows her.
Emily. His practice 'twas
Which to this issue led—on some account
I know not—nay, nor guess. He durst not treat
Sir Valentine with overbearing mien,
So took advantage of fair Hero's weakness,
To play upon't, expose, and with disgust
Surfeit the man he fear'd.
Sir Wil. And he succeeded?
Emily. Ay, to the full, sir, as I have possess'd you.
Sir Wil. I am sorry for it. He had begun to love her,
And would have made to her a worthy husband;
Safe guardian to her wealth; and one to make
A proud wife of a higher dame than she!
It crossly hath fallen out. But she is piqued,
You say, at his desertion?
Emily. Much, sir!—Much!
She wept, as I acquainted you.
Sir Wil. You did,
And matter see I there. Unfeigned tears—
And such were hers—from deep-laid fountains flow,
Abiding in the heart! The argument
Which draws them thence, as deep must even go
A curling lip I had not heeded—that
Were simple scorn—but they who weep for scorn
Do weep for something more. Sir Valentine
Hath not his peer in England! Trust me, girl,
She's not so blind with folly, as not to see
His paramount desert.—Where is she?

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Emily. Lock'd
In her chamber with her milliner,—so says
Her maid. These three hours have I craved admission,
But all in vain; she has not yet press'd pillow
Sufficient to repair her spirits from
The waste of yesternight.
Sir Wil. A wayward girl!
New dresses, pleasures, lovers—all things new,
Except herself. Would that would change as well!
Some mode she studies with her minister
Of novelty, will flog all former folly. [*Knocking.*
What sober knock is that?—Such seldom calls
At her fantastic door. Who knocks?

Enter Servant.

Servant. A man,
Of formal habit and consorting speech,
Usher to one most young and fair; a maid
Who seems to know no use for beauty, but
To mortify it with ungainly guise.
She asks to see the mistress of the house.
Sir Wil. Admit her!—On what errand can she come?
[Servant *goes out, and returns, showing in* CLEVER, *followed by* HERO, *both disguised as Quakers.*
Who art thou?
Clever. Man unto Ruth Mapleson,
Who with the woman of the house would speak.
Sir Wil. The woman of the house!
Emily. Ruth Mapleson!
Hero. Friend, am I right? This house of vanity,
Is't the abode of that unfortunate
They call the city maid? who to the use
Of one, perverts what Heaven did lavishly
Commit unto her, for the good of many!
Is this her house?—and if it is, I pray you
Acquaint her that a sister, pitying
Her hapless state of blindness, ignorance,
Omission and offence, hath come to her
To clear her vision, to inform her mind,
To teach her occupation, and from evil
To turn her steps aside.—Umph!

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Clever. Umph!
Sir Wil. My breath
Is almost stopp'd with wonder!
Emily. So is mine.
What can it mean?
Sir Wil. Some poor fanatic 'tis,
Whose zeal hath warp'd her reason.
Hero. Sinful man!
Thus is it with the children of the flesh;
What argues wisdom they misconstrue madness!
Though through perverseness rather than conviction.
Tremble!—Look down!—Abase thee to the dust!
Shouldst thou not blush at thy grey hairs, the vouchers
For thriftless years, for profitless experience!
'Tis winter with thee—harvest-time is past—
What hast thou garner'd? Chaff instead of grain!
What doest thou with gauds like these, thy trappings?
Why standest thou beneath this roof of pride,
That shouldst be thinking of the charnel-house
And the attire of its inhabitant?
I know thee uncle to that maid of lightness,
That mistress of this house of emptiness,
And whom I come to chasten and to teach!
Umph!
Clever. Umph!
Emily. Dear sir! who is't? I grow uneasy!
With strangeness yet familiarity
She strikes me, that consist not! I do feel
As though an apparition stood before me,
And wish she were away!
Sir Wil. And so do I!
Hero [*to* EMILY]. And thou, poor flesh and blood!
—illusion! heirdom
O' the worm! that think'st thyself all soundness, yet
Art all corruption! Why abidest thou in
The lazar-house? Depart from it! Pull off
Its dress, and don the clean and wholesome guise
Of plainness and humility—Umph!
Clever. Umph!
Sir Wil. This bold intrusion and address—
Hero. Peace, Satan!

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And yet, perhaps I wrong you! Privily
You may condemn proud Hero's fantasies?
Sir Wil. I do.
Emily. And so do I.
Hero. O do you so?
Then are ye not, as I did reckon you,
O' the children of the Prince of Darkness?
Sir Wil. and *Emily.* No.
Hero. You see that she is very vain?
Emily. We else were blind.
Sir Wil. Stone blind!
Hero. Capricious?
Emily. As many moods as there's hours in the day.
Sir Wil. Say minutes, rather!
Hero. Fond of pleasure?
Emily. Her constant occupation.
Sir Wil. 'Tis her meat
And drink; rest, business, studies, prayers, and sleep!
Hero. She hath no constancy in aught—
Lovers especially?
Emily. She changes them
Too often.
Sir Wil. She doth use them as her dresses!
Show her a new one, she casts off the last,
How new soe'er put on.
Hero. I pity her.
Emily. She scarce deserves it.
Sir Wil. Pity is too good
For such a piece of waywardness, perverseness,
Pride, folly, fantasy, and emptiness!
Hero. So then we are all of the same mind?
Emily. Exactly.
Sir Wil. Not a pin's point difference!
Hero. You would approve that I reform her then?
Emily. Reform her! could you do so? Do so.
Sir Wil. Do!
Do! Make her anything but what she is.
Emily. Change cannot fail to better her.
Sir Wil. No change
Can make her worse!—Reform her, pray!
Hero. I will.

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Sir Wil. and *Emily.* When?
Hero. When you take her for another thing
And find her just the same!—Oh, uncle, fie!
Fie, Emily! is this your loyalty?
Sir Wil. What means this metamorphosis?
Hero. Defence
Of my sex's rights—assertion of my own!
Instruction to that master-work, call'd man!
Protest and re-establishment of due
Prerogative! reduction of rebellion,
Compell'd from reared crest to bended knee!
Pains, penalties, bonds, confiscations, deaths,
To follow thereupon!
Sir Wil. Why, niece, what wind
Doth bring this sudden storm?
Hero. Are you a man?
Sir Wil. I trust I am!
Hero. Then if you are, you know
The privileges of a single woman.
We have few, Heaven help us! when we change the state
Most rightly dubb'd of single blessedness!
Is 't not a single woman's right to rule?
Sir Wil. It is.
Hero. To have her will her law?
Sir Wil. It is.
Hero. To have as many tastes, moods, fits, as she likes?
Sir W. It is.
Hero. To come, to go, to smile, to frown,
To please, to pain, to love, to hate, do aught
Without dispute?
Sir Wil. It is.
Hero. Is't not enough,
You have leave to look upon her—listen to her—
Stand in her presence—wait upon her? Must
Her 'haviour, speech, be what you like, or what
It likes her sovereign self that they should be?
Sir Wil. What likes her sovereign self!
Hero. You *are* a man!
Would all your sex were like you! Who are not,

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Are not for me, believe me! Look you, uncle!
I'll make the saucy traitor feel my power,
Or I will break my heart! He thinks me fair—
I thank him! Well-proportion'd—very much
Beholden to him! Dignified and graceful—
A man of shrewd perception! very!—send him
On expedition of discovery!

Sir Wil. Whom mean you, Hero?

Hero. Whom?—Sir Valentine!
He has made his bow! Indeed, a gracious one—
A stately, courtly, condescending one!
Ne'er may I courtsey, if he bow not lower!
I'll bring him to his knees as a spoil'd child
With uplift hands that asketh pardon, then
Command him up, and never see me more!

Sir Wil. Why, how hath this befallen?

Hero. I did not dance
To please him! No, sir! He is a connoisseur
In dancing!—hath a notion of his own
Of a step! In carriage, attitude, has taste,
Dainty as palate of an epicure,
Which, if you hit not to a hair, disgust
Doth take the place of zest! He is sick of me!
My feet the frolic measure may indulge,
But not my heart—mine eye, my cheek, my lip,
Must not be cognizant of what I do—
As wood and marble could be brought to dance,
And look like wood and marble! I shall teach him
Another style! Come! I have found you out;
Will you compound for your sedition,
And help me? Come! how say you, little traitress?

Emily. Content.

Hero. And you, most reverend rebellion?

Sir Wil. Command me aught, that I can do in reason.

Hero. Can do in reason! In what reason? There
Are fifty kinds of reason! There's a fool's reason,
And a wise man's reason, and a knave's reason, and
An honest man's reason, and an infant's reason,
And reason of a grandfather—but there's
A reason 'bove them all, and that alone

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Can stand me now in stead—a woman's reason !
Wilt thou be subject unto me in that ?
Sir Wil. I will.
But tell me whence this speech of solemn phrase ?
Hero. From one I knew and loved at school—a girl
Half, by the sect that practise it, brought up.
But she of thought and will therewith consorting,
The mistress likewise was—most veritable.
Her name was Helen Mowbray—by the arts
Of that same lord to whom I owe the coil
I would unwind me from, and whom, through whim,
Not liking, I have countenanced, 'tis said
She fell—but not in my belief. How is this ?
I am growing serious ! You will help me ?
Sir Wil. Yes.
Hero. That's my good uncle ! That's a darling uncle !
There ne'er was kinder, nor more sensible !
A good, dear, wise, obedient, docile uncle !
Give me a kiss ! Hence, Master Clever ! Do
What I directed you—Sir Valentine
Is not yet out. Invite him where I told you—
To the house at Greenwich. [CLEVER *goes out.*
Sir Wil. What dost thou intend ?
Hero. Order the carriage—no ; it must be one
They lend for hire :—and come along with me—
I'll tell you on the way. Emily !—Uncle !
Look you ! [*throws her glove down*] I'll have him, as my glove that there,
At my feet doth lie, till I do pick him up !
And I will pick him up—but in a way !
There !—give it me again—O, you dear uncle,
To help my plot !—do what I wish !—You ought
To be an uncle ! There's another kiss !
And if I do not make him kiss the rod,
I'm ne'er a niece deserving such an uncle !
Come ! come !—I did not dance to please him ! Come.
[*They go out.*

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SCENE III.—*Sir Valentine's House.*

Enter SIR VALENTINE.

Sir Val. Oh, pitiable case! so rich a stamp,
And yet the metal base! For what high things
Did nature fashion her!—whose rich intent
Had she but half fulfill'd, no wealth, no state
That earth can furnish, for aggrandizement
Of craving and insatiate ambition,
Conferr'd on her, had given her half her due,
Far less its debtor made her! Misery!
To find the good we hoped, the bane we hate!
Hate!—O, perverse and doubtful course of love,
That in the goal it pants for, finds its grave!
That reaches for a bliss, and clasps a pang!
That now doth own a mine, and naught anon!
O beggary most poor, that from the lapse
Of dwindled riches grows!

Enter Servant.

Servant. You are wanted, sir—
Sir Val. Who wants me?
Servant. One who brings an errand from
Sir William Sutton, and craves speech with you.
Sir Val. Admit him. [Servant *goes out.*

Enter CLEVER.

Well?
Clever. Are you the man they call
Sir Valentine de Grey?
Sir Val. That man am I.
Sir Val. Then, being he, another man they call
Sir William Sutton, sends me here to pray
Thy company this afternoon, to meet
Some friends who dine with him at Greenwich.
Sir Val. Say,
I cannot come.
Clever. Art thou engaged, friend?
Sir Val. No.
Clever. Then thou speak'st not true. Thou canst
come.

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Sir Val. Say,
I will not come.
Clever. He bade me say to thee
Thou *must* come.
Sir Val. Must come?
Clever. Yes; so come along.
For he did charge me bring thee, and I said
I would; and not to bring thee, were to break
My word, and make him angry.
Sir Val. Tell him, then,
I was not in.
Clever. I will not tell a lie.
Sir Val. Art thou his servant?
Clever. No; but man to one
That's niece unto him—that is, in the flesh—
Not in the spirit.
Sir Val. Wherefore?
Clever. Know'st thou him,
And know'st thou not he is a man of sin?
Ruth Mapleson is of the faithful!
Sir Val. Who?
Clever. Ruth Mapleson.
Sir Val. I know no niece he hath,
Save one—fair Mistress Sutton.
Clever. Name her not—
Daughter of darkness.
Sir Val. Liar!
Clever. Thou dost lie
To call me so.
Sir Val. Wretch!
Clever. Thou dost lie again.
I am a godly and a happy man,
That waits upon Ruth Mapleson; the niece
Of him they call Sir William Sutton; and
Cousin to Hero Sutton, whom in naught
Doth Ruth resemble save her face and form,
Where she might pass for her, she is so like her.
Sir Val. So like her! said'st thou, like her?
Clever. Thou didst hear
I did; so like her, 'twere a cunning eye
Could tell the one from the other. That's my hand;

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I take 't away, and show it thee again:
Is that another hand?
Sir Val. Knave, 'tis the same.
Clever. Miscall me not, friend! Knave is not my name,
But Obadiah. Use me civilly,
That do instruct thee, who art ignorant.
Not more in likeness is that hand the same,
Than Hero Sutton is Ruth Mapleson
In feature, figure, face, complexion, all
That makes the outward woman—but within,
Winter and summer are not less akin!
Sir Val. How, knave?
Clever. I told thee not to call me "knave;"
My name is Obadiah.
Sir Val. Obadiah
I'll call thee then. How are these cousins as
Unlike as winter is to summer?
Clever. Thus.—Is winter barren? so is the maiden Hero; is it made up of fogs and rain? so is the maiden Hero of vapours and the spleen; hath it much cloud, and little sun? so hath the maiden Hero great discontent, small content; hath it long night, and brief day? so hath the maiden Hero lasting displeasure, short favour; is there any depending upon it? no more is there upon the maiden Hero; do you wish it heartily away? so would you be rid of the maiden Hero.
Sir Val. I fear thou art a slanderer.
Clever. I see
Thou lack'st good manners, which is grievous, friend,
In one of thy degree. Thou callest names
As scavengers that quarrel in the streets,
Most unbecomingly!
Sir Val. Well; now proceed.
What of her cousin?
Clever. Though a godly man,
Yet am I flesh and blood, and thou dost vex
My spirit, friend, by so misusing me.
I tell thee once again, my name is not
Liar, nor knave, nor slanderer, nor aught
But Obadiah.

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Sir Val. Well—enough of that;
Her cousin? Come! Her cousin?

Clever. Though I am
A man of peace, I am a valiant man.
I combat not, but yet the elements
Of war are given me, friend! I am full of them,
Save what is in me of the goodly thing
That mortifies the flesh, and keeps them in
Subjection! Yea, I am a warlike man!
Yea, verily, a very warlike man!

Sir Val. I ask thy pardon.

Clever. I do grant it thee;
Thou dost a proper thing; and now shalt hear,
Wherein the maiden Ruth, who, outwardly,
Is to the maiden Hero what that maiden
Is to herself, is, inwardly, reverse
As summer is to winter.

Sir Val. Prithee on!

Clever. Is summer fertile? is summer clear? hath it little cloud, much sun, long day, and short night—and that more like day, than night? is summer constant, and do you wish it never away? so is the maiden Ruth bounteous; so is the maiden Ruth cheerful; so hath she twenty smiles for one frown; lasting favour, brief displeasure, which you would almost take to be favour; so is she little liable to change; so would you wish to have her ever with you!

Sir Val. Where dwells this cousin?

Clever. In Greenwich, friend, whither thou goest; not in the same house with him that sends for thee—for light dwelleth not with darkness—but in another habitation, where her books, and her flowers, and her own sweet thoughts, which are fairer and wiser than either, are her only companions.

Sir Val. I'll go with thee to Greenwich. Lead on!

Clever. Hold, friend!—You must do all things soberly.

[*They go out,* CLEVER *preceding, with extreme gravity.*

END OF ACT II.

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ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Outskirts of London.*

Enter EUSTACE *and* WALSINGHAM.

Eust. Now for the confidence you promised me.
Wal. Canst thou not guess my story? Look at me!
Seem my years more than his you'd reckon in
Life's outset, when beneath our feet all's flowers,
Above our heads all sun? Canst not divine
What could alone o'ercast and wither thus?
Nor only take away the adjuncts sweet
Of that fair prime of hope, but prospect leave
Of nought but cloud and barrenness?
Eust. Ambition?
Wal. No; that's an after-game. There's one we play
Before, o'er which the heart doth throb, as o'er
None other! where we throw the die, whose turn
Nine times in ten's the oracle foretells
All chance to come! which, if we play in earnest—
And light are they, who of that game make light—
We make ourselves for ever, or lose all,
Doubling the value of our being, or
Reducing it to naught?—a game, methinks,
Which you have play'd at—Love.—Am I not right?
Eust. You are.
Wal. You didn't win?
Eust. [*hesitatingly*]. I—didn't.
Wal. How?
You speak as one that yet did neither lose—
Whose game not yet was out—a chance, although
With heavy odds against him. Mark me; if
Thou hast rivals whom she entertains like thee,
With just so much of hope as doth suffice
To keep them suitors still, while each can say,
She's mine, as well as t'other—give her up!
Away with her! Abandon her for ever!
Thou woo'st, what, if thou win'st—the tongue is kind—
Not that doth give thee joy—but wish thee dead!
The keeper, not the owner, of a thing

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Wherein is lock'd thy life, and thy life's gems—
Thy peace and honour dear!
Eust. Won such a maid
Thy love?
Wal. Not such a maid! No; she did live
Forbid to all but me. The statue's ear
And eye, you'd think, as much perception had
Of wonder at the consummate chisel's skill,
As hers of praise from others' eyes and tongues.
But, oh! at lightest glance or sound of mine,
How would the rich and fair-wrought marble glow!
Eust. Thou mourn'st her dead, then?
Wal. Dead?—Ay, dead! a corpse,
A mouldering corpse, that's with corruption housed,
Which skill medicinal can ne'er restore
To its sweet life again!—the which to weep
Is all that fondest eyes may look for now.
The life, alas! of her fair honour's gone!
Eust. What! lived she but for thee, and gave she up
Her richest jewel to another?
Wal. You
Shall hear my story. What in form she was,
I will not paint to you.—Each lover has,
You know, the fairest she—say, mine's a paragon
As much as thine—nay, of the very charm
That's crest of all, thou wilt but make a seat
To mount some plume of hers, whom thou affect'st,
That shall transcend it far! I know it—so
Forbear. Yet had you e'er set eyes upon her!
Oh! she did stand alone! To truest hearts
The sight of her was wonderful estrangement,
Weaning them for a time from things, howe'er
Clung dotingly to before—that mistresses
Have sadden'd to see eyes, that blazed on them
Ere they were turn'd away, turn back again
Listless and icy cold! Riches and rank,
Bestudded o'er and gilded, have look'd blank
To see themselves outshone without a gem!
Nay, very hostesses, whose only care
Was to behold their costly huswifry
Approved, have been discomfited to see

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Their tables crown'd as ne'er they were before,
And she the only garnish of the board!
Eust. Thought you not others' eyes did see like yours?
Wal. No! no! I saw they did—I felt they did—
Felt it through many a pang of doubt—but not
Through fear of her demerits, but my own!
Eust. Ne'er gave she cause to doubt?
Wal. No!
Eust. Still she fail'd?
Wal. As life—when health, that is the heart of life,
Seems sound to the very core! has ne'er given sign
Of flaw or speck—this moment in the bloom—
The next, is blasted!
Eust. What you do assert,
The more you do assert, the more I doubt!
What! truth to falsehood in a moment turn?
Virtue to vice? Love to estrangement? Love!
And in a woman! Had she loved before?
Wal. No!
Eust. Her first love, too! But she was a child?
Wal. No; in the blush of bursting womanhood.
Eust. And left thee for another? No declining
Of that first passion? Never seen to wan
A little now—now more? but all at once
Go out! Impossible! You've been deceived!
Abused! you have! my life, my soul upon it!
Wal. They're costly pledges to be forfeited;
Then risk them not!
Eust. What canst thou set against them?
Wal. Proofs! facts!
Eust. Facts?
Wal. Facts! *My* cause thou wast engaged in?
How is't I find thee in another's listed?
Eust. Whose is the cause of her thou lovest, but thine?
Wal. Not if she's false.
Eust. But if she's true?
Wal. She's not!
By truth, she's not!
Eust. By truth, she *is!*—unless,
Things, that do coincide much as the East
And West—high Heaven and the Abyss—noonday

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And midnight—reason and madness—contraries
Confess'd and palpable—for so opposed,
I own, do your averments seem to me—
You prove are in accordance.
Wal. Listen, then!
Who wins a prize, thou know'st wins envy too.
With such a prize thou wilt not wonder then
That many grudged my fortune! 'Mong the rest
Was one—a satire on the saucy code
That makes the wreath of merit birth-right, when
No law can make the grace that wins it so.
This titled profligate alone, no check,
Reverse, rebuke, rejection, could divert
From pressing still his suit: my arm had tried it,
But that she hung upon it, minding me
The life I'd peril was the heart of hers!
She did!—and for enforcement show'd to me
Vouchers on vouchers—genuine sighs and tears!
Art couldn't feign such—I'll do justice to her—
She then was true—as true as haggard since!
Why weep'st thou?
Eust. Thou dost weep; and tears draw tears,
When grief itself doth fail.
Wal. Then dry your eyes;
You'll ne'er see mine again! you think me lost
To honour?
Eust. No!
Wal. What! not to weep a wanton?
Eust. O, not a wanton!
Wal. How!
Eust. Not *then* a wanton!
Wal. Not then! The devil was once an angel—what
Of that? He fell!—who weeps him? no one! What
Though she was once a spirit of light, as he was,
When now she's black as he?
Eust. Nay!
Wal. Doubt it not!
To cavil at the right we feel to writhe
Is aggravation, that adds wrong to wrong,
And drives before-o'erburthen'd patience mad!
The sun did stare upon it!—'twas not lewdness

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Chamber'd—behind the curtain—'twas i'the street,
Light as noonday could make it!—without cloak!
Hood! veil!—Now call it questionable! Nothing
To mask the wanton!—Oh! for a thunderbolt,
To strike me then!—From a noted, libell'd stew,
Led by the noble libertine—his trophy,
Worn on his arm in the gaze of every eye—
I saw her issue.

Eust. Did she shun thee?

Wal. No!

Eust. That was a proof of innocence.

Wal. Of guilt!

Rank! rank!—a sudden and entire infection,
A touch and rottenness! as from the bite
Of a serpent, in an instant, ruddy life
To black corruption grows! Why should she shun me?
She had her tale at hand! 'Twas but to make
Her paramour her friend; their assignation,
A freak of chance; her reconcilement to
A man she loathed before, a debt; and for
That debt assign a cause equivalent;—
All which she did in a breath! 'Twas clear, sir; clear!
The truth spoke for itself! Fact born of fact—
Nought out of place or disproportionate!
As obviously that follow'd this; this that;
As this doth chime with this, and that with that!
A thing one must believe! From end to end,
A lie, sir!—He had saved her from a villain!
The villain! When appeal'd to, he did damn her!
"He fain would bear her out! His life was hers!—
"His fortune—but upon a point of honour—
"In question with a man of honour—not
"That he denied her fair averments though—
"He pray'd she would excuse him!"

Eust. You believed him!
Him you believed, that ne'er was true before!
Her disbelieved, was ne'er before but true?

Wal. She did admit it.

Eust. How?

Wal. By damning silence!

Eust. Is't guilt alone, convicted, that keeps silence?

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Guilt—saucy guilt—that dares to break the law
Of God and man! Remember you no case,
Where innocence accused hath all at once
Been stricken dumb?—appall'd to undergo
The charge of sin, that never could endure
The thought of sin? Appearances against her,
And witness for her none, but her own heart?
Her very blood betraying her, deserting
Its post upon her cheek, whence, were it bold
As honest, 'fore a host 'twould ne'er give way!
Remember you no case like this? or if
Your memory none records, is such a one
So much at odds with probability,
Your fancy cannot image it? A woman,
Young, charily brought up, as vestal for
The fane! Suppose a novice so sincere,
She loved and knew it not, till, by its signs,
Others more skill'd did find the passion out,
And tell her that she loved!

Wal. Thou draw'st herself!

Eust. And such a one, by accident or plot,
Sudden to stand in such predicament
As of her honour valid question founds—
In presence too of him whose value for
The gem doth make it doubly, trebly, dear—
And then, appealing to a villain's truth,
To find the tongue, should clear, but blurr'd her more!—
Oh! I would ask for signs of life as soon
From lips of stone, as look for words from hers!
She couldn't speak! Speak? breathe! she would be stunn'd
To utter lapse of every sense, except
That at her heart, which told it at that time
It would be bliss to break! Should she be true
At last—

Wal. No more of this!

Eust. Have I not shaken—
Not much, but somewhat—say, a little—say,
A very little—your belief of her
Dishonour?

Wal. Speak not of her.

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Eust. If she is pure,
Despite appearances, as first you thought her;
Constant, despite desertion; and despite
Wrongs, scornings, brandings, fond;—it may be fonder—
For woman's love's a plant, I've often heard,
Which mocketh all that thrive in winter time,
Not only keeping green, but growing then.
Wal. You take, methinks, strange interest in her fate!
Eust. I have a friend, whose fate resembles hers—
Whose cause I'm sworn to right! Besides, we're friends.
Thou art not happy?
Wal. No.
Eust. I'd see thee so.
To have thee so, I'd wish thee in the wrong.
She's not forgotten—is she?
Would she were!
Eust. Perhaps thou lovest her still?
Wal. To madness! There's
My malady. I love her—not what she is,
But what she was. What's present—that's her swerving,
That's palpable, which you may see, touch, handle,
Define, weigh, prove by any test is real—
Feels but a phantasm, a conceit, a dream,
A horrible one!—in contrast with what's past,
Her worth, her love, her constancy, that vanish'd
Or e'er you question'd them.
Eust. Art sure of that?
Come, come, thou'rt not, at least, thou'rt not quite sure.
Now did she stand before thee undismay'd,
Confiding in thy honour—say thy patience—
Say thy endurance—
Wal. If my eyes could look
The mandate of my soul, they would flash lightning on her,
To blast her where she stood! What ails thee?
Eust. Nought—
What did I do? How did I look? What saw'st,
To ask? Did I turn pale, or start, or what?
Do I tremble? Feel!—I am past fear, grief, pain,
As death! Give me thy arm, and come with me.
I'll show thee what a piece of rock thou thought'st

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Did quake. Thou a false woman, as thou think'st her,
Would'st revenge—I would revenge a woman wrong'd,
Bitterly wrong'd; so wrong'd, that after her
None should complain of hardship! Come! and see,
Which holds his purpose most tenaciously.
[*They go out.*

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in* HERO'S *House at Greenwich.*

Enter SIR VALENTINE *and* CLEVER.

Sir Val. I tell thee, I must see her!
Clever. Friend, thy face,
Albeit no modest one, thy deeds outdo
In forwardness! I brought thee but to see
The maiden's house—and thou would'st enter it!
Nor therewith rest'st content—but must have speech
With her that owns it, and escheweth thee
As all ungodly things!—
Sir Val. And I will have it!
So tell thyself—but gently say to her,
A stranger craveth audience. Mind—a stranger.
And do my bidding; else I may forget
Thou art a man of peace, and, may be, beat thee.
Yea—beat thee—I repeat it! and, I pray thee,
Make me not do't again!
Clever. I will submit—
Ere I will use the argument o' th' flesh,
For that would hurt my spirit. Umph! I am gone!
[*Goes out.*
Sir Val. So far, so well! Admittance I have gain'd,
And now an audience wait—but doubtingly.
Her cousin!—Then behoves me change my name,
Else, knowing me for Hero's suitor, she
Will spurn me. Yes! I'll even call myself
Sir Launcelot de Vere.—Can this be she?
The knave hath mock'd me—and the world of hopes
That sudden rose to my imagining
Doth melt to nothing.—Stay!—It forms again!
It grows to probability.—No vapour

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That takes a passing form, is here and gone,
But a sincere and palpable creation!
Another Hero is there—or I do see
The same!—Oh, likeness to beholding, e'en
Incredible! that makes with wonderment
The vision waver, and the utterance fail!

Enter HERO *(disguised as before)*.

Hero. Well? What's your will?
Sir Val. Forgive me, lady, if
With occupation of mine eyes, awhile
I did forget the office of my tongue
To give thee 'custom'd salutation.
Still would I gaze, nor speak; art what thou seem'st?
Hero. What seem I, friend?
Sir Val. Likeness—unlikeness! A thing
Most different—and yet the very same!
What I would give averment of most strong—
Again most strong deny! The form of the bane,
With the sweet virtue of the antidote!
The rose was canker'd yesterday, to-day
Freshness and soundness to the very core!
Oh beauty that doth know its proper pride,
And nothing deigns to ask to set it off
Except simplicity, that offers nought,
Yet all that's due performs! I have not lived
Till now!—I have but dealt with shows of life,
Automatons, that do not not know themselves,
But act from causes are no part of them!
But here is nature's mechanism—mind
And soul—a body fitting them, informing
With motions of their own.
Hero. Friend, art thou mad?
Sir Val. Mad, lady?
Hero. Rational, thou canst not be!
Sir Val. Not rational?
Hero. If that—which much I doubt—
Certain not favour'd with the grace of truth.
Sir Val. Doubt'st thou I utter aught but truth?
Hero. I doubt
Thy wits, thy wisdom, or thy truth. Not mad,

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Thou art not wise—if wise, thou speak'st not truth.
And sooth to say, thy dress of vanity,
Thy looks of wildness, and thy air assured,
Where one who knew propriety would feel
Disturbance—this abrupt intrusion, which
Nor leave, nor introduction, nor acquaintance
Doth justify—approve thee void of truth,
Unwise, or mad!—if none of these, a man
Of cloddish nature, base and ignorant!

Sir Val. Oh! say not cloddish nature! Say not base,
Nor ignorant! It is the dignity
Of man, that the bright stars do tempt his mind
To soar the empyrean where they sit,
Placed infinite beyond terrestrial reach,
And scan their uses and their essences,—
High argument of his affinity
To him that made them, and the immortal light
That shall outlast this filmy, shadowy sphere
Whereon they look and smile! 'Twas told to me
That thou wast perfect fair—I doubted that,
For I had found, methought, the paragon
Of beauty's wealth in woman! then 'twas said
That thou wast wise—I wish'd thee that, for still,
Though oft at fault, in noble house I've lodged
Noble inhabitant! 'Twas said again
That thou wast good—then I believed thee wise,
For wisdom should bear goodness or no fruit!
And good and wise, believed thee fairest too,
And coveted! Nor come I without leave—
Thy simple life, eschewing worldly forms,
Was pledge for leave! Nor lack I introduction
That honest errand bring to vouch for me.
Nor, least of all, acquaintance—I have known thee
Since matured thought, my nature's fondest wish
Informing, told it loveliness of soul,
Yet more than body, doth belong to woman,
And, therewith when abiding, doth make up
The highest sum that earthly happiness
Amounts to—nearest what we hope in Heaven.

Hero. Friend, dost thou know thou talkest to a
Sir Val. A worm? [worm?

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Hero. A mite!
Sir Val. A mite?
Hero. Nor yet a mite—
A congregate of evils, whereunto
The worm and mite are strangers?
Sir Val. Evils!
Hero. Know'st not
That beauty will take cold? will have the tooth-ache?
Will catch a fever?—that its peachy cheek
Will canker in a night?—that its sweet lips,
Palace of smiles, spasm doth compel to change
Their garish tenants for uncouth contortions?
That its fair dress of pride—its velvet skin—
Humours will spot, discolour?—that, in brief,
It is a thing in value vanishing
As fickle merchandise, which rates to-day
Enormously—the next, may go a-begging?
And, worse than all, that its chief merit lies
In wishing, not possessing?—coveted,
Of purchase measureless—obtain'd, worth nothing.
Sir Val. Thou mean'st the beauty that but meets the eye?
Hero. I mean the beauty thou alone dost see,
And provest thou only see'st. Why, what pains
Thou takest with a common piece of clay
To set it off! a fine account to turn
The bow of God to—meant for spiritual,
And not corporeal use—with divers tints
To clothe thy body! besides lading it
With the mine's produce—gems and metals—proof
Far more *without* concerns thee than *within!*
Oh! that a nature of immortal reach
Should house its aspirations in a crib
Like this poor tiny world! and, taught to look
Above the coronets of the fair stars,
Go proud with grains of dust and gossamer,
The property of things inferior to him,
As motes unto the sun! But I forget—thy errand?
Sir Val. Love!
Hero. 'Tis clear, thou'rt mad! What! love
Whom thou didst never see?

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Sir Val. Nay, pardon me
And let thy patience lend me audience, while
I show thee my credentials, on the faith
Of which I come. I have seen thee very oft—
Hero. Stark mad!
Sir Val. Nay, rational—as rational
As reason in its soberest, perfect mood—
Held converse with thee, countless times.
Hero. Broke loose
From Bedlam!
Sir Val. Walk'd and sat with thee—
Hero. I trust
Thy keeper is at hand!
Sir Val. He came with me.
Hero. Where is he?
Sir Val. Here, although thou see'st him not.
My keeper's Love. I have woo'd thee for a month!
Hero. Hoa! help!
Sir Val. Be not alarm'd.
Hero. Nay, touch me not!
When didst thou break thy chains?
Sir Val. I wear them yet;
The subtle ones that self-same beauty forged,
Which now I look upon—most gorgeous dress,
But by another worn.
Hero. Oh! you have loved
One that resembles me.
Sir Val. I have.
Hero. 'Tis not
A fit, then?
Sir Val. No; for fits are vanishing.
This is a mood like nature's, lasts for life.

Enter CLEVER.

Clever. Why didst thou call? I heard thy voice, in fear.
Hero. All's well, good Obadiah.
Clever. Is it so?
Then I may go again. Young man, beware
Thou frighten'st not that maiden. We are meek,
And offer not offence; but meeting it,

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As injury will make the worm rebel,
We turn, and we are strong—yea, very strong!
Whose wrath, albeit a pebble, hath avail
To smite a giant!—therefore, tempt it not!
Umph! [*Goes out.*

Hero. Thou hast known a maiden like me?

Sir Val. Yes;
I have loved a maid, most like thee—most unlike;
Without, as costly,—but within, as poor
To thee, as penury to affluence.

Hero. And did'st thou love and woo her for a month,
And a defaulter thus? 'Twas grievous lack
Of penetration.

Sir Val. Nay, 'twas specious show
That valid credit won.

Hero. Thou art a man
Like all thy worldly class, of shallow mind.
Thy heart is in thine eyes: what pleaseth them
Is sure of that.

Sir Val. Nay, I had then loved on.

Hero. What cured thy love?

Sir Val. I saw her in a dance
Light nature show—

Hero. A dance! Oh! I have heard
Of such a thing. An idle pastime. What
But folly comes of folly? Do you dance?

Sir Val. I do.

Hero. What kind of a thing is it? Come, show me!

Sir Val. I pray you to excuse me.

Hero. Nay, but dance.

Sir Val. I pray you, ask me not.

Hero. Thou dancest badly?

Sir Val. Nay, I have won some credit in the dance.

Hero. Then do the thing thou hast won credit by.

Sir Val. I cannot.

Hero. Friend, thou art ashamed to dance.

Sir Val. Nay, not ashamed.

Hero. Then, dance!

Sir Val. 'Twere out of time
And place.

Hero. What, out of time and place, and to

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A man of gallantry, to do the thing
A lady wishes him; and he the while
On sufferance in her presence! I do see!
Thou art in a grave mood, and for a man to dance,
And look like Solomon, I must suppose
Were more offence to seriousness, than wear
A cap and bells. Friend, it is very clear
Thou canst not dance, and look like a wise man—
Yet thou did'st woo a lady, thou did'st say,
And cast her off, because she did not dance
With gravity!

Sir Val. She danced with lightness more
Than lightest measure warranted. No thing
A modest woman does—say that it touches
The utmost verge of licence—but that cincture,
Of better proof than zone of adamant,
Its holy and offence-repelling fires
Doth wave around her, that the libertine,
Unwon by honour, yet is tamed by awe!
She danced to gladden eyes whose burning glances
Turn thoughts of honest men on flashing swords,
On flame at stains washed out alone by blood!
The empire of her beauty giving prey
To parasites, who love for their own ends,
And by their homage shame!

Hero. We have talk'd enough.

Sir Val. Your pardon! Yet we have not talk'd at all—
The errand yet untold, that brought me here—
I would have leave to woo thee.

Hero. Thou! a man
Of the vain world!

Sir Val. Nay, of no world but thine!

Hero. Thou of my world! How comest thou by these gauds—
Lace, ribbons, tinsel, trinkets, slashes—not
To name that most egregious vanity
Thou mountest in thy cap, and the poor bird
It was purloin'd from wore for use, not show!
Rebuke and lesson to its wiser lord!
There's not a portion of thee but bespeaks

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Ransacking of the earth and sea—and all
To recommend thee unto eyes, whose owners,
Be they the homeliest, behold thy betters
In their own mirrors.
Sir Val. I will dress to please
The eyes of none but thee.
Hero. Thou should'st be rich—
Too rich for modest happiness, and all
Beyond is but the name! Riches are bars
Prevent us enter Heaven; how then be doors
On earth to admit us unto aught of Heaven?
How many hundreds brings thy rental in?
Sir Val. As many as make up a thousand pounds
To welcome every quarter.
Hero. Poor young man!
How I do pity thee!
Sir Val. I will reduce
My revenue.
Hero. Canst thou reduce the wants
Thy revenue hath gender'd—foes to thee
Under the masques of friends?
Sir Val. My every want
Is now summed up in one.
Hero. Hast thou a title?
How art thou named?
Sir Val. Sir Launcelot de Vere. [Launcelot?
Hero. How would'st thou bear be call'd plain
Thou would'st not know thyself. We have no titles.
Names, being of themselves, no part of us,
We only value as distinguishing
One from another. Stephen, Ephraim,
John, Obadiah, Solomon, suffice.
All adjuncts else, as Misters, Sirs, Earls, Dukes,
We do regard as superfluities.
Sir Launcelot de Vere! I neither like
Title nor Christian name. More proper far
Would Peter fit—or Mark, or John, or Luke,
Or Nicodemus—names of men of peace,
And sounding passing sweet.
Sir Val. The name is mine
Thou givest me.

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Hero. So thou believest now :
To-morrow, thou wilt be the former man.
Nor must I longer talk with thee ; for sweet
I own the proffer of thy duty comes,
Although by me received mistrustingly.
Persist not, friend, or I will wholly doubt
What half I would believe ;—which, if indeed
Thou mean'st—and, here, the frankness of a maid
Doth overshoot her coyness—thou canst prove
Hath matter weightier than airy words.
Farewell ! What shall I call thee ?
Sir Val. Launcelot.
Hero. So soon forgot.
Sir Val. Mark, Obadiah, Job,
Peter, or—or—I lack the other names.
Hero. No matter ! These are grateful as the rest,
Nor 'mongst them Peter least ! What a sweet name
Is Peter !—I will call thee Peter, though
It be for the last time [*Sighs*]. Farewell, friend Peter.
Sir Val. Stay ! How may I call thee ?
Hero. Say, Ruth.
Sir Val. Farewell,
Fair Ruth !
Hero. Fair Ruth ! So soon forgot again !
Friend Ruth, thou ought'st to say.
Sir Val. Friend Ruth, farewell !
And yet another word ! Have I thy leave
To come to thee again ?
Hero. That must depend
On how thou comest.
Sir Val. Then sure I come again !
Friend Ruth !
Hero. Friend Peter ?
Sir Val. May we not shake hands ?
Hero. That must depend on how thou shakest hands.
Sir Val. Why, how should I shake hands ?
Hero. Why, soberly.
Sir Val. Then soberly, friend Ruth, shake hands with me.
Hero. There, that is long enough !

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Sir Val. One more word yet—
Friend Ruth, may I not kiss thy hand?
Hero. Friend Peter!
Sir Val. I'll kiss it soberly—yea, soberly.
Farewell—once more—farewell!—One more.—It is
A banquet gathers appetite.

Enter CLEVER.

Clever. Young man,
What dost thou?
Sir Val. Nothing.
Clever. Yea, a thing doth vex
The spirit of the maiden, and to mine
Doth give disturbance—yea, a forward thing,
Abomination to the faithful—yea,
Abomination.—Go! [*Placing himself between them.*
Sir Val. Farewell!
Clever. Avaunt!
Such things become not eyes like hers or mine
To look upon.—Avoid!
Sir Val. Farewell! I'll come
Again.
Hero. Then come with more discretion, friend.
Clever. Thou hear'st—avoid! Remove thee hence!
Begone!
Make not a crook, friend, of thy body—say
Farewell—do nothing more—and go!
Sir Val. Farewell!
Hero. Farewell!

END OF ACT III.

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ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Park.*

Enter LORD ATHUNREE *and* FELTON.

Ath. I did appoint him to attend me here.
Behoves my door and he be strangers, lest
Our practices be traced. Want dogs him still,
And fits him for my purpose, by the threat
Of her pernicious tooth. Yet there's a weakness,
I would he had not. He doth love a child;
Which shows his nature is not callous all;
Whence do I ofttimes dread some start of ruth.
But finds he out fair Hero's close retreat,
The meagre knave shall fatten. Soft! he's here—
Well, have you traced her?

Enter LEWSON.

Lew. Yes; she is at Greenwich,
Where I and mine do live and famish.
Ath. Fool!
Not to have guess'd as much, and know she hath
A villa there. Resides she by herself?
Lew. She does.
Ath. Then is she mine. Canst thou obtain
Secret admission?
Lew. Easily, my Lord;
Into her very chamber, which doth open
Into a garden.
Ath. It must be done to-night.
Lew. Most strangely is she changed.
Ath. How?
Lew. In her dress,
That's of the fashion of that formal sect,
Which at all worldly modes exception takes.
Ath. Indeed! some plot's on foot, and doth concern
Her quarrel with Sir Valentine. To-night,
She gives me lodging. Stay—we must proceed
With such exactitude, the sun and dial
Shall vary soon as we! I'll write it down. [*Writes.*

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'Sdeath! I must change a word! I'll write it o'er
Again, that thou may'st have no scratch to hang
Excuse for failure on. There. Be observant
To the syllable. Away! Thy greatest hire,
For former service, I will double for thee,
Succeed'st thou but in this.
Lew. Misgive not, sir;
I ne'er before did fail you. But, so please you,
Some present prompt supply. My children starve!
My wife, to find them half a meal a day,
Hath worn herself to skin and bone, and now
Can drag her limbs no more to forage for them.
Their pressing need relieve, and do with me
Whate'er thou wilt.
Ath. There!
Lew. All is noted here,
Behoveth me to heed?
Ath. No jot forgot.
I may rely upon thee?
Lew. As on one
Whose life is in thy hands. [*Goes out.*
Ath. The cards do turn.
Fel. I pray you, what intend you?
Ath. He obtains
Admittance; I am on the watch, without;
She is alarm'd; I hear her cry for help;
And to her rescue naturally come.
I enter how I can, and once within,
Shape as I may the rest—assured of this,
She will accept protection; giving which,
I cast what colour on the case I will,
Ensuring payment full.
Fel. Thou art the prince
Of plotters!
Ath. Thou art no less royal there.
So hold we charge of one another's secrets,
Neither is like to break.

Enter EUSTACE *and* WALSINGHAM.

Eust. Lord Athunree,
I do accuse thee of a murder! and

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Do undertake to justify myself,
At the point of the sword. Hast thou the courage to
Abide the trial, whereunto I now
Demand of thee thou fixest time and place,
For thy defence? I do repeat the charge
And challenge too—thou art a murderer!
And I demand thou pay the penalty,
Which if I prove defaulter in exacting,
I am content to leaguer my own life.
For the third time, I charge thee with the deed!
Of felony more capital accuse thee
Than ever caitiff on the scaffold paid
The forfeit of! A murder cowardly!
Unparallel'd! past human nature savage!
Wilt thou confront me? Wilt thou? Canst thou? Darest thou?

Ath. Doubt'st thou my answer prompt as thy demand?

Eus. Give it, and leave not room for question! Where,
And when, shall we the mortal issue try?

Ath. To-morrow!—Stay!—that gentleman thy friend?

Eust. He is.

Ath. He passes then as voucher for thee.
Yet I'll prevent miscarriage in the thing
Thy heart so earnestly is bent upon,
To its deep cost, I fear. There! time and place
You see are written down.

[*Writes on the back of the paper he had first written upon.*

Eust. For this I thank you,
That I may thoroughly be quits with you,
And all the payment on thy side be due.

Ath. Farewell! Thou art young, but yet more rash than young!

Eust. I am not rash, but by reflection act
As I do now, with hope my arm will prove
Staunch as my tongue. Thou art a murderer!

[LORD ATHUNREE *and* FELTON *go out.*

Wal. My fellow-student! Wonder hitherto

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Hath tied my tongue! Has he a wrong with thee
To settle too?

Eust. He has! Let's see what time and place
He hath appointed? Ha! what's here?
Oh, Providence is here! [*Aside.*] A plot to ensnare,
In helpless ruin like to mine, the heart
In girlhood still was nearest to my own.
Then must I see thee, Hero! Pride must now
Give way to love. Occasion calls me hence,
More urgent yet than that which brought me hither.
Nor must we go together. Question not;
But, at our place of practice, give me meeting
An hour at least ere noon.

Wal. I shall not fail. [*Goes out.*

Eust. Oh, what a case is mine, to wear the brand
I never merited!—to be denounced
The child of guilt, that am the daughter free—
Except the primal all-referring lapse—
Of innocence! To be amerced of that
The loss of which might make offence a thing
To be commiserated more than blamed—
For nothing!—So!—Inconstant to him!—So!—
A wanton!—So!—The framer of a lie!—
He loves me still! I pardon all for that!
For that his tongue shall rail at me again—
Pronounce me faithless—liar—wanton—aught!
Aught that I am not, for the blessed AM
That still assures him mine! Oh, I do play
A novel part. A solitary maid,
Herself to vindicate her injured name!
No father, brother, friend, to plead the cause
Of her wrong'd honour, and her baffled love!
No champion left her but a woman's arm
Back'd by a woman's heart!—yet, trusting these,
And to just Heaven appealing, resolute
For life or death to meet the mortal strife!—
But where is Hero? Does thy friend forget thee,
And thou in peril? No! She flies to save thee.
[*Goes out.*

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SCENE II.—*A Room in Hero's House at Greenwich.*

Enter HERO.

Hero. My game the more I play successfully,
The less my eagerness to win it grows.
'Tis all but mine, and thought of victory
Sits at my heart so heavy, for defeat
To turn up now were respite to me! respite!
False gains are poor possessions, bringing not
Content—the touchstone of true happiness!
And yet I punish him! For what? for right?
Retaliation of offended wrong!
Yet did he bear me beyond patience hard.
At once to throw off duty! and my slave
To start up my dictator, that ne'er yet
Met bended brow of man—in presence too
Where vassal homage had awaited me!
He should be made to bow! and, once become
My thorough captive, spurns for spurning take!
Yet doth he raise him, by those lofty thoughts
He breathes of zeal and honour for my sex,
While I do sink as coming short thereof!
With this regard I fail. I must see nought
Except my purpose—by the dread of loss
Yet to enhance my value in his eyes,
Propound my terms, and to the issue come
That shows him foil'd, and me the conqueror!

Enter CLEVER.

Clever. Ma'am, he is come!

Hero. Then show him in, and mind
What we arranged, touching those friends of mine
I am to summon from the other room.

[CLEVER *goes out.*

How shall I struggle through the race, wherein
I gasp at setting out!

Enter CLEVER, *showing in* SIR VALENTINE.

Clever. Here is the man
That wants to speak with thee—be careful, for
I like his habit better than his looks.

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He minds me of some child of Satan, who
My spirit hath offended—watch him, Ruth,
And advertise me if he troubleth thee. [*Goes out.*
Hero. Thy business, friend?
Sir Val. Dost thou not know it?
Hero. Yea!
If fits thy purpose, friend, thy habit, grave
And goodly must it be—what is its shape?
Instruction or admonishment, or what?
Unfold thee. Be it righteous and discreet,
I'll hear it as an humble sister ought.
Sir Val. Dost thou not know me?
Hero. Yea! that thou art one
Amongst the faithful—but I know not who
That one may be.
Sir Val. Not know me, sister Ruth?
Hero. Oh! is it you, friend Peter, come again
Into a new man changed!
Sir Val. So changed for thee!
My fortune I've reduced. Made o'er to thee
For purposes of heavenly charity!
Hero. Made o'er thy fortune? Could I this believe?
[*Aside.*
Sir Val. My thousands, lady, have since yesterday
To hundreds dwindled, at thy will. If that
Contents thee not, but still I seem too rich,
Say but the word, the hundreds shrink to tens—
The tens to units—these again to nought,
That my fond love may win most rich reward.
Hero. I dream'd not of such love! [*Aside.*
Sir Val. My title gone.
Hero. Thy title gone!
Sir Val. Had it been costlier,
More readily it had been thrown away,
As to thy wish, whereto it gave offence,
A meeter sacrifice! Plain gentleman
Is all they rate me now; if that's too high,
I'll be plain yeoman, for thy gentle sake;
If that, low hind! aught lady, aught! to please
The wise desires are guardians to thy love!
Hero. His title likewise gone! I have o'ershot

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My mark! I'll stop!—Too late—I must go on!—
Thy work not yet complete. Our sect, thou know'st,
Prohibits marriage, save amongst its own;
To number thee with whom if thou inclinest
To recommend thee, it behoves thee win
Some brother's, sister's, word—such are at hand—
Wilt thou submit thee to their scrutiny?

Sir Val. At once.

Hero. But mind, whate'er they do remark,
Thou takest in silence—even in good part.
It will be scandal to me else, because
Of entertaining thee.

Sir Val. Thy bidding, law. [HERO *rings.*

Enter CLEVER.

Clever. Hath he misdone? Am I to put him forth?

Hero. No; brother Ephraim I wish to see,
And with him sister Grace.

Clever. They saw the man
Ascend the steps, and when he was let in,
They oped the door themselves, and vanished!
Thereto advised by his forbidding looks.
Friend Ruth, he's poison to thee. Yesterday
I lost much grace accompanying him
From London unto Greenwich, so he vex'd
My spirit by the lightness of his gait,
And mortified me, as he drew the eyes
Of flaunting damsels on him! To reform him
Is hopeless, for the more I did admonish,
The more did he offend; till scandalized
Beyond endurance e'en of my meek spirit,
I waver'd between option to stand still
And let him on alone, or run and leave him.
Observe moreover he's a man of wrath,—
Look at him! He could eat me up—yea, eat me
Like to a ravening lion a poor lamb!
Ne'er judged I looks of man—if inwardly
He does not bite his lips! Be sure he swears!
Yea, he blasphemeth!—Get him from thy doors!
Eject him from them! Into the highway with him!
Heed not if night or day—in sun or rain—

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Or lose thy place among the faithful, Ruth!
Umph! [*Goes out.*
Hero. See they do reject thee—yea,
They do reject thee!
Sir Val. Do not thou the same!
Oh, let me talk to thee in my soul's speech—
List! I have staked my life on winning thee!
Not in my own breath, but in thine I live!
My portion in the sun, the earth, and all
The affluence from their copartnery
Derived, I have made o'er to thee, nor now
Except by thy vouchsafing can enjoy!
Am I to live or die? Nay, think before
Thou speak'st, and those fair thoughts to council call,
Yet richer than the sumptuous palace which
They make their proud sojourn! So like to Heaven,
Hast not its ruth that makes us daily bless
Its governance? Thou hast! and as thou hast,
Let it beam down its influence on me,
And save thy worshipper! Thou let'st me kneel—
Sure then—O! sure I do not kneel in vain.
Hero. Rise up! These proofs of honest passion quite
Confound me.
Sir Val. Hear me! O, the world! the world,
That's made up of two hearts! That is the sun
It moves around! There is the verdure! There
The flower! the fruit! The spring and autumn field,
Which in the reaping grows! the mine that, work'd,
Accumulates in riches—ever free
From influences of the changing stars,
Or aught, save that which sits above them higher
Than they above the globe!—Come! make with me
E'en such a heavenly world.
Hero. Beseech thee, rise!
Sir Val. In hope?
Hero. In hope! What did I say?
Sir Val. Thou said'st—
Thou badest me rise in hope. [*Rises.*] Thy heart is moved.
Hero. 'Tis touch'd.
Sir Val. And nothing more?

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Hero. Perhaps a little,
Sir Val. How may I call that little? what's its name—
If haply of the kind I'd have it be,
'Gainst all I've thrown away, and ten times more,
I'd set it—Lady, tell me, what's its name?
Oh, deal magnanimously with me, nor
What 'tis not wrong to feel, when thou dost feel it,
Believe 'tis wrong to speak! Frankly! could'st love me?
Hero. Frankly, I could.
Sir Val. Once more, be frank—and dost thou?
Hero. Frankly, I do.
Sir Val. I said, "once more be frank,"—
Yet must I say once more be frank again.
Hero. And if thou dost, I will be frank again.
Sir Val. Wilt take me for thy husband?
Hero. There's my hand—
If no impediment forbids thee, clasp it.
Sir Val. None.
Hero. Soft—I'll do't! 'Twill be a sweet revenge! [*Aside.*
A thought doth strike me. Thou hast loved a damsel,
My likeness it should seem—and one know I,
Who to the vision so resembles me,
As doth myself, myself; nor can the ear
That hears us, well determine which is which,
In pitch and tone our voices so are one.
The damsel thou affectedst may be she—
Her name is Hero Sutton.
Sir Val. 'Tis the same.
Hero. Another thought doth strike me. Is the name
Thou gavest to me thy real one? Alas!
Thy colour mounteth! It is clear! Thou art
Sir Valentine de Grey? Alas! alas!
Your leave to be alone.
Sir Val. Are you not well?
Hero. Oh, yes; I'm very well. Good e'en! Quite well!
Well as a woman can be when she finds,
Too late, she rashly gave her heart away,
To one, whose value for the gift will be,
Soon as he proves 'tis his, to bid her keep it.

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Sir Val. To bid her keep it!
Hero. As Hero Sutton rues!
Sir Val. She never gave
Her heart to me.
Hero. She did! you know not when
A woman gives away her heart! at times
She knows it not herself. Insensibly
It goes from her! She thinks she hath it still—
If she reflects—while smoothly runs the course
Of wooing; but if haply comes a check—
An irrecoverable—final one—
Aghast—forlorn—she stands, to find it lost,
And with it, all the world!
Sir Val. No maid could love,
And act as she.
Hero. How did she act?
Sir Val. I told thee.
She danced to please a libertine, and pain
A man of honour, who did worship her.
Hero. She danced to please no man but thee. Your eyes,
She thought upon her, did alone inspire her
In the measure. Thorough conquest of the heart,
She thought was all but hers, she hoped to make;
And so, with all her soul endeavouring,
Did lose it all, and with it all herself!
Sir Val. If she had told me this—
Hero. If she had told!
When? pray thee, where? or how?—did'st name a place,
Or time, to hear her vindicate herself?
Did'st even hint it to her? In a breath,
You doubted, tried, condemn'd, and sentenced; nor
'Fore witnesses did'st pity her to spare her!
They should beware, who charges lay in love,
On solid grounds they make them! for, there are hearts
So proudly fond, that, wrong them here, they'll break
Or ever they will stoop to right themselves.
Much such a one is hers; and yet, with all
Her pride—for strong as that, more strong her love—
She trusts to win thee still.

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Sir Val. She gave me up, without a sigh or word.
Hero. So had I given thee up, had I been she—
And I do love thee.
Sir Val. See me at thy feet.
Hero. I can't, with thought how thou hast knelt at hers.
Sir Val. Nay, hear me, but in pity.
Hero. She in pity
Did hear thee! Much it profited her!—much!
She now, it seems, may sue!
Sir Val. I swear to thee
Eternal constancy!
Hero. Thy witnesses, thy oaths to her!
Sir Val. Where are the smiles just now
Did beam upon me?
Hero. Quench'd by Hero's tears.
Sir Val. By Hero's tears! She never wept for me!
Hero. She show'd thee not her tears; but what of that?
Her eyes might pour, and thou not see a drop.
I know they did so.
Sir Val. Let me hold thy hand.
Hero. Never, till her thou hast wrong'd thou offerest
To right. The world return to, thou would'st quit
It seems for me. Resume its habit; hie
To Hero Sutton's, whom I will advise
To look for thee to-morrow eve. Repeat
What I have said to thee. If she denies
What I aver, be free to come to me,
And welcome too! If she acknowledges,
The hand of her, whose heart thou hast purloin'd,
Behoves thee ask and take.
Sir Val. Yet hear me.
Hero. Nay!
These are the terms on which we break or meet.
Sir Val. If she rejects me?
Hero. Then will Ruth be thine.
Sir Val. If she accepts me?
Hero. Then still thine—She dies!

[*They go out severally.*

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SCENE III.—*An Ante-Room leading into Hero's Chamber in the same House.*

Enter LEWSON, *from the Window.*

Lew. Safe! Safe!—all silent! What has turn'd my feet
From flesh to lead? My body, which to bear
Their function is, doth seem to drag them on.
I wont not thus to feel. Ferrying across
From Limehouse now, I saved a drowning man.
Twice had he sunk in sight of his young brood,
That with their dam kept fluttering on the shore.
How they did bless me! while the standers by
Did echo them, and to inquirers say,
That ask'd who saved him, "Yonder's the good man!"
And I afoot to do an evil act!
Another should have saved him! Let it pass!
Is this her chamber? No, her dressing-room.
Ay, here's her woman's gear. What holds this case?
Her paint, I'll warrant—her cosmetics—aught
To give another skin; they're ne'er content
With nature's; patches, perfumes, dentifrice!
A book?—I'll wager one she durst not show!
A Bible! Umph! Strange reading that, methinks,
For a fine lady. Here's a leaf turn'd down;
What says the place? It seems to talk to me!
I'll read no further! So—what have we here?
Her letters! Excellent! Her letters!—now
To see how they can look and talk the saint,
And play the sinner still. A hundred pounds,
The first is an amour!—A wretch's prayer
For help—herself and children without food
For two whole days! What, baggage! beg ere rob?
Wait for a thaw, and see thy little ones
Congeal to death i' the icy world!—with the thought
I have a feeling how the tiger's fangs
Rend for her cubs a meal!—What alms did'st hope
Her ladyship would give?—What would suffice
The dressing of her gown she wears a night
And casts aside for foul! What's here—is this

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Her answer—or the copy on't? Indeed?
Ay, when she gives she gives! She seems to think
That poverty, like plenty, is made up
Of flesh and blood. There's food for dam and whelps
For a whole week. The letter's to my wife!
She dined to-day—fall to 't—fall to 't—thy brood
May gorge them now! Methinks I see them feed!
Heaven bless her!—What! Heaven bless her, did I say?
Then, what do I do here? No more of this.
I've work to do, chimes not with thoughts like these.
No more on't. Footsteps!—so—beast to thy lair.
[*Conceals himself.*

Enter HERO; *she goes to the window, and looks out.*

Hero. Whether mine eye with a new spirit sees,
Or nature is grown lovelier, I know not;
But ne'er, methinks, was sunset half so sweet!
He's down, and yet his glory still appears,
Like to the memory of a well-spent life,
That's golden to the last, and when 'tis o'er,
Shines in the witnesses it leaves behind.
They say, a ruddy sunset a fair day!
Oh! may it be a day without a cloud,
Which of my fate doth see the clearing up;
That I may quote it ever as a sign
Of sincere fortune, often as I say
Was ever day so bright! How calm is all—
How calm am I!—Would every breast I knew
Did lodge a heart as tranquil.—There was one—
A most strange history! Is she alive,
Or dead? [EUSTACE *appears at the window.*] Who's there?

Eust. [*entering.*] A friend!

Hero. Help!

Eust. Hush! I come
For safety!

Hero. To thyself?

Eust. To thee. Look here,—
Lest I should miss thee, I prepared this scroll.
More brief 'twill tell my errand, than my tongue
Could do't.

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Hero. [*reads.*] Lord Athunree!—This very night!
My house beset—myself by force abstracted!
Eust. If thou hast kindred in the neighbourhood,
Or friend thou canst rely upon, forthwith
Of thy immediate danger caution them
By hands you can confide in—for my pains,
I pray you pay me with the only audience
Of some poor moments, when I'll take my leave.
Hero [*to herself*]. I need not fear him! On his o'ercast brow
'Tis grief, not guilt, that lowers.—A minute's patience,
I shall rejoin you. [*Goes out.*
Eust. Thou art happy, Hero,
And she that loves thee, weeps—but not that thou
Art happy. Thy fair fortune is the likeness
Of what was once my own! It is a face
Reminds me of a valued friend that's gone,
And which I bless, the while it makes me weep!
Hero [*re-entering*]. What you advised, I've done—and now your pleasure?
Eust. Have I your leave, I'll sit. I've used some haste—
Am somewhat out of breath—I thank you! So!
Pray you be seated, too. You've had your share
Of friends?—Your 'haviour's of the winning kind,
That goodness sweetens!—you are frank—you love
Another's weal more than you envy it—
And such a one makes friends.—'Mongst those you've found
You surely some do miss, else was your fate
Past earthly blessing happy?
Hero. I've lost friends.
Eust. By—death?
Hero. By death.
Eust. And any by misfortune?
Hero. Misfortune!—No, not any.
Eust. [*rising.*] What!—not one?
Good night!
Hero. What mean you? Do you take me for
A season friend, no stauncher than the bird
The sun doth tell his time to come and go,

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And's with us when 'tis summer?—O, you wrong me!
What!—I to love, as doth that summer bird
The land he makes his gay sojourning in,
My friend, because 'tis leaf and blossom time!
Indeed you wrong me!—Knew I at this moment
A cheek I loved, was beggar'd of its smiles—
Not one left to it—I swear to thee the next—
If back'd my power my will—before the next,
My own should be its neighbour.—Oh! how much
You wrong me!

Eust. Glad I am I've done thee wrong—
In sooth, I am—and yet I wrong'd thee not,
I only miss'd thy meaning! Had'st not a friend
Misfortune lost thee?—not that thou shunn'dst her,
But that her heavy and most strange affliction
To thee and all her sex forbad her access?

Hero. A friend? a sister! What a fate was hers!
Of all I valued, she the being was
I least could measure worth with. Of all grace,
The pattern was she—person, features, mind,
Heart, everything, as nature had essay'd
To frame a work which none might find a flaw in!
And yet 'tis said, she fell—and if she did,
Let none be sure they'll stand! She couldn't fall!
There's such a thing as purity on earth,
And if she fell, there could be no such thing!
She didn't fall!—no! no!—I knew her, or
I never knew myself! Virtue with her
Was not a lesson we must con before
'Tis learn'd by heart; it was a portion of her,
Much as her stature, feature, limb or shape,
Which, saving nature's, hand did never give.
She has been outraged, slandered—aught—but lost!
She could not fall—she did not—could not fall!
What ails thee?

Eust. He that sets a banquet down
To famish'd lips, serves poison and not meat,
For, ten to one, the greedy guest doth die.
Yet doth he bless the host, as I bless thee,
That spread'st for me this feast!

Hero. This feast! What feast?

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Move not thy lips thus impotently, or
I'll think thou diest indeed! What feast do'st mean?
Is't one the heart makes? 'Tis—thine eyes do talk
Language 'twould tax a hundred tongues to speak!
In wonder's name, who art thou? Say thou'rt not
What thou dost seem, I'll thee tell who thou art!
Could I not do't?—Could I not?—Helen?—What?
Well? Am I right? If ever thou did'st lodge
A treasure in this breast, ne'er fear to claim it!
'Tis safe—whole—whole—demand it—take it—come—
'Tis thine as e'er it was!—Well?

Eust. [*Speaking as* HELEN.] Hero!

Hero. Nay,
I'll bring it to thee, then! That's right—weep on!
My sweet! my dear! my poor! my wrong'd one—yes.
Wrong'd—wrong'd—I say't again! Thou need'st not speak,
Thou hast not strength—thou'lt sleep with me to-night?—
To-morrow for thy story.

Helen. Nay, to-night.
I'm more myself again!—Let it be so—
Sit down a while. How hast thou been, my Hero?

Hero. Well, sweet, most well.

Helen. Now by the love
Thou bear'st me, interrupt me not, but hear
My story out. Thou hast been told, that from
A roof which shelters aught but innocence,
In company with one, whom innocence
That would be safe should shun, i' the face of day,
Thy friend was seen to issue. Thither by
A forged tale of misery alone
She was decoyed—exposed to outrage there—
Rescued by him—by him conducted thence,
Met in the street ere well her foot had left
The threshold—countenance refused her tale
By him that sole could vouch its truth—by *him*
Her tale discredited, whose credence was
Life! happiness! all but honour! In a word,
Her virtue blasted, that had ne'er known blight—
Denounced as canker'd—rotten—that was sound
As thy own, Hero—ay, as thy own!

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Hero. I know't.

Helen. You know't? Alas, you know it not—you think it—

Think it in the teeth of damning fact. It is
Your love—your charity. An alms—an alms—
Is all that friend so kind as even thou,
Can render now to me—yet, I'll be righted!
But fare-thee-well—'tis late!

Hero. You'll stay with me?

Helen. What! let me press thy pure sheets, Hero, with

A tainted name? How I have wrong'd thee!—wouldst
Believe't? I once came to thy door—but there
I stopp'd. I was not wont to ask for leave
To enter it, and I must ask for't now!
I left thy door again—the certainty
To see it never ope' thy friend preferr'd
To but the chance to see it shut upon her.

Hero. To but the chance to see it shut upon thee!
What warrant ever gave I for such chance?
Oh! had it wider, free'r ope'd than e'er,
It only had anticipated what
Its mistress' arms had done—what now they do!
You shall not leave—nay, in sooth you shall not!

Helen. In this attire, think, should I here be seen—

Hero. I'll think of nought, but that thou here art now,

But that thou here shalt stay. Thou canst be gone
At dawn. Thou know'st a thousand things I have
To ask of thee—how we shall meet again—
Where I shall find thee—what thy projects are—
Deny me not, I pray thee! 'Twill but make
The greater beggar of me—Come! you can,
You must—you will—this is my chamber—come!

[*They go out.*

Lew. [*Entering in disorder.*] I cannot do't! Heaven's on the watch against it!
'Tis said it guards the good, and if it does,
Its spirits sure are here—they are!—or why
This fearful awe come over me? I feel
As eyes were on me, that I cannot see—

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Above me lips that speak but are unheard—
And hands that have a thousand thousand times
The power of flesh and blood, yet lack the bulk
Of air! Heaven will not have it be—it sets
Before mine eyes, the fruit of what I've done—
To warn me back from what I've come to do.
That hapless maiden owes her injured name
To me! I was the instrument to ruin her!
To fix on her the wanton's brand, that ne'er
In thought it seems did know the wanton's stain.
To damn in this world, what i' the next is blest!
Oh! heavy sin—Go sin no more! How's this?
Go sin no more! So said the book to me.
Then Heaven doth care for sinners, it should seem!
A blessed book! I'll go and sin no more!
The chime! It lacks a quarter of an hour—
The very clock doth watch me. Was't the hour,
They'd have me in their fearful toils again!
Away! away! speed feet, while ye are free,
Softly and swift—the minutes fly! away! [*Exit.*

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—HERO'S *Town House.*

Enter SIR WILLIAM SUTTON *and* EMILY.

Sir Wil. What! Helen Mowbray come to life again?

Emily. 'Tis even so; and metamorphosed as
You ne'er would dream. But pray you, use despatch.
On the reverse of this she gave your niece,
And which unthinkingly no doubt was given
To her, 'tis clear some mortal work's on hand—
For here are time, and place, and weapon named,
Upon the part of base Lord Athunree.
There yet is time! Prevent it, while you may!

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Sir Wil. [*rings the bell.*] Hark, sir! Take charge
of this, and have it straight
Put into execution by the chief
O' the city officers—look to it well!
And now, what means this full assembly call'd
Of friends and relatives, to feast with Hero?
Emily. I must not tell—but guess.
Sir Wil. I cannot guess
The shapes particular of women's fancies,
Especially in one of Hero's vein.
Retains she her disguise?
Emily. No; casts it off—
And with it, habit more a part of her.
She is changed beyond belief.
Sir Wil. Not my belief
When I do see it.
Emily. I must hie to her,
And set her mind at rest on this affair,
Touching her friend, which chance reveal'd to her,
In time, I trust, the issue to prevent.
You have given order they be hither brought?
Sir Wil. I have. Where's Hero?
Emily. In the library,
In earnest converse still with that strange man,
Who pray'd an audience with her, and I think,
Brought news that has surprised her. Dinner time
Will see an end and clearing up of all.
[*They go out severally.*

SCENE II.—*The outskirts of London.*

Enter WALSINGHAM *and* HELEN *(still in the disguise of* EUSTACE).

Wal. Not yet arrived!
Helen. 'Tis 'fore the time.
Wal. How feel you?
Helen. Collected, and myself.
Wal. You look so. Clear
Your 'haviour, as this day of trial only

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The ordinary mate of yesterday,
You'll win!
Helen. I shall!—I am resolved to win.
Wal. Show me thy sword.
Helen. I cannot draw it, but
My life must follow.
Wal. How?
Helen. It is my heart—
This which I wear, is nothing. Call it steel,
'Tis steel!—a straw, it even is a straw!
Its stamina not lodging in itself,
But in the use that's made on't.
Wal. This is calm,
Upon the eve of combat.
Helen. Walsingham,
There is a kind of nature that clears up
The instant it confronts a trying thing.
In common evils, hesitates and fears;
In ills of moment, shows sedate resolve.
Wal. Why, that is woman's proper contradiction.
Helen. It passes for't; but sometimes 'bides in man,
Not therein less of his high caste deserving,
Though so resembling woman! Think'st not so?
Wal. Assuredly.
Helen. You see this mood is mine,
Nor was I on my guard to let it out—
'Twill lose me credit with you. Best have pass'd
For Sir Redoubtable any day o' the year!
You more had thought of me.
Wal. No!
Helen. You say I am calm?
I am so—that is, as to the issue of
This mortal meeting—for 'tis mortal!—but
I have a trouble, and—wilt thou believe me?
'Tis touching thee!—It grieves me, Walsingham,
To leave thee an abused man behind me!
What thou didst tell me I have ponder'd well,
And thereon founded arguments, methinks,
More solid than I urged on you before.
They are here—your poor friend's legacy to you!
[*Gives a paper.*

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Stop !—you're about to speak—don't speak as yet.
If I should fall, you pledge your gentle word,
My body you will have direct convey'd
Unto the lady's I have herein named.
[*Gives another paper.*
Delivered to her custody—her own !
Nor until then, one fastening, fold, loop, thread
O' the vesture, thou wilt suffer be disturb'd—
No, not to search, or probe, or staunch a wound,
Or settle if indeed alive or dead,
Or anything ! To this, thou pledgest thee ?
Wal. Dear boy, I do !
Helen. Another thing—
Wal. What is't ?
Thou pausest, as in doubt I'll grant it thee.
Whate'er it be, I'll swear to do it.
Helen. Ha !
Then thou dost set my heart indeed at rest !
Mind, thou hast sworn to do't. Revenge me not !
That comprehendeth all ! Don't speak again,
Till I have done, quite done. Thou lovest me ?
Wal. I do.
Helen. How much ?
Wal. As never man before !
Helen. Speak not of love gone by, but present love.
With those thou lovest now, how rates thy love ?
Wal. As first !
Helen. As first of all ?
Wal. Of all !
Helen. All friends ?
Not one before me ?
Wal. No !
Helen. Not one ?
Wal. Not one !
Helen. And all love told ?
Wal. All love, but love itself.
Helen. Shake hands !—We'll say good bye before they come,
Lest there arrive occasion, and no time !
Good bye !—Oh, happy women, that are friends !
They may embrace—men cannot do so.

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Wal. Yes,
When they are brothers.
Helen. Feel'st thou as my brother?
I feel as I were thine.
Wal. My boy! my boy! [*Embracing* HELEN.
Heaven!—but thou faint'st!
Helen. No!—Are they coming!—Heaven
Reward thee, for thy precious love of me!
They are at hand—Good bye!
Wal. Show me thy sword!
'Tis somewhat longer, I believe, than mine,
And I would try the depth of yonder stream,
In case we need to wade it.
[*Goes out, and returns without the sword.*
It has slipp'd,
And gone down to the bottom!—Boy, your quarrel's mine;
To humour thee, did I consent to play
The second to thee. Stand aside, with broad
And lusty breast and sinewy arm, and see
Thy stripling form the deadly point oppose
In the athletic villain's practised hand;
Instead of grasping thee with loving force,
Like to a doting father his boy-son,
Or elder brother his dear younger one,
Taking thy place, and swinging thee away!
No, boy! Before thy young veins part a drop
Of their life's streams, my channel shall run dry!
Helen. Is this fair, Walsingham?
Wal. Yet, hear me on!
I find I could not live without thee; so
Guarding thy life, I but protect my own
That's fair—that's rational—that's sound in nature!
Want'st further reason?—I will give it thee—
Thou art like her!
Helen. Whom?
Boy, hast thou read my soul—
Have I turn'd o'er its every page to thee—
Love, hate, hope, doubt, possession, loss, bliss, pain,
Contentment and despair—and in each one
Shown thee one all-pervading cause enwrit,

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For nothing? Whom could I compare thee to,
But her—the heroine of my sad story?
Whom much thou dost resemble! Hast thou never
Remark'd me gazing in abstraction on thee,
As though, upon perusal of thy face,
While seem'd mine eye intent, my soul did pore
Upon some other thing?—I have done it oft—
Will do it once again! Your eyes are hers,
In form and hue, but sunk; a darkness too,
Not heavy, yet enough to make a cloud,
Sits—not disparagingly though—'neath thine;
Hers were two starry brilliants, set in pearl!
The outline of the nose is quite the same,
But that of thine is sharper—'tis thy sex.
The mouth is very like—oh, very like!
But there's a touch—a somewhat deep one too—
Of pensiveness. The cast of hers was sweetness,
Enlocking full content. The cheek is not
At all alike!—'tis high; and lank below;
And sallow—not a dimple in't—all contrast
To the rich flower'd and velvet lawn of hers.
But though thou art not she entire—thou art
Enough of her to make me love thee, boy!
With such a brother-love, as brother never,
I dare be bound, for brother felt before!
I spoke not of thy hair—it is a wood
Run wild compared to hers, and thrice as deep
I' the shade—Yet, you are very like her!—quite
Enough, to make me pour my heart's blood out,
As water, for thy sake!—They are at hand!

Helen. Then let me be at least thy sword-bearer;
And when thou need'st the steel, I'll keep the sheath
Which in thy motions would embarrass thee.

Wal. Take it, and thank thee!

Enter LORD ATHUNREE *and* FELTON.

Ath. We are late for you, sirs;
But not, I think, for time.

Wal. You are in time.

Helen. Draw off, till, with his second, I arrange
Preliminaries—which I know are wont,

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In questions of this kind. What we decide,
I will possess you of; and then proceed.
Sir, let us speak. You know me, principal.
My place my second would perforce usurp.
Permit him not, as you're a gentleman!
You see he is unarm'd—your rapier draw,
When I draw this, and force him stand aloof.
You promise this?
Fel. I do! [*Aside.*] It keeps the odds
Upon our side!
Helen. [*Drawing.*] Lord Athunree, I am ready!
Fel. [*Drawing, and opposing* WALSINGHAM]. Stand back, sir, at your peril!
Wal. Ha!—the boy
Has baffled, and outwitted me! [*Advances.*
Fel. Stand back!
I bar all interruption to the game
We are summon'd here to play.
Wal. A coward act,
To draw upon a naked man!
Fel. My lord!
Why draw you not, and he his weapon out?
Proceed, my lord, at once.
Ath. Before I do,
I ask, and I must learn, in name of whom
The urchin has arraign'd and challenged me.
I fight not, till I know upon what cause.
Helen. The cause of Helen Mowbray!
Wal. Drop your hand,
And let me pass!—or sure as that's a sword
My heart is on your point!
Ath. Spite of thyself
Another minute grant I thee to live.
I will not draw, until I know thy name.
Helen. Mowbray!
Ath. Her brother?
Helen. Anything you please,
Caitiff without a parallel in crime!
Wal. A brother!—Hold! Lord Athunree! Look, sir,
A moment give I thee, to take thy choice

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'Twixt murdering me, or suffering to pass!
Heaven! do I care for life!

[*Rushes upon* FELTON, *and wrests the sword from him. At the same moment,* Officers *and Servants enter.*

First Officer. Hold! Stop!—Proceed
At your peril! you are all our prisoners, sirs;
Sir William Sutton's warrant makes you so,
Which here I show to you. Surrender, then,
And to his niece's bear us company.

[*They all go out.* WALSINGHAM *and* HELEN *last, who stop a little behind the rest.*

Wal. Thou half hast kill'd me, boy! How could'st thou do so!
Or keep from one, who loved thee as I do,
A secret like to this? Her brother—so!
Her brother!—I shall love thee better still—
And better yet—and yet not half so well!

[*They follow.*

SCENE III.—*The Street.*

Enter SIR VALENTINE.

Sir Val. Spite of my failing heart, thus far I've come
With love to urge me, love to waive me back.
My duty tender'd, fortune made or lost—
Not tender'd, absolutely lost—no chance
Permitted me to win! 'Tis Hero's form
With the fair essence—match for thing so fair—
To Hero's form without! It is a whole,
Past calculation rich, against a part,
And that the poorest—yet consummate rich.
And I must play for both, or neither win!
Or winning one, the other quite forego!
It cannot be she loves me! Hero love me!
A prideful pleasure kindles at the thought—
But comes the gentle Ruth, and puts it out
With genial brightness of bland nature, as
The sun a little fire. O sun most fair,
I richer were ne'er to have known thy light

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Than knowing it to lose it. Ne'er did man
Draw lots with chances more opposed than mine.
A little moment I am made or lost,
Lost past retrieving—past addition made!
Then must I, like a desperate gamester, on!
Throw fear of loss aside—though loss of all—
And think of nothing but the chance of gain
That makes me rich for life!—past affluence!
[*Goes out.*

SCENE LAST.—*A Room in Hero's House.*

SIR WILLIAM SUTTON *seated in the centre*—WALSINGHAM, HELEN, LORD ATHUNREE, FELTON, *Officers, &c.*

Sir Wil. Lord Athunree, charged with intent thou stand'st
To break the peace of our right sovereign lord
The king. What answer'st thou, or dost refuse
To plead?—Is this thy hand?—Wilt answer that?
Whose'er it is, it is a villain's, lord!
For the same writer that arranged a fray
Did plan a felony—in danger put
A lady's jewelry, so rich to her—
Not all the caskets of the proudest line
Of noble dames, pour'd out into one heap,
Could make a blaze to match it!

Ath. [*Aside.*] Curse my haste
For such remissness, on the back to write
Of the instructions first I pencilled down
To give the caitiff wretch—whose guessed miscarriage
Is now accounted for!

Sir Wil. Lord Athunree,
How say you?

Ath. For the combat you have marr'd,
My silence or denial naught avails.
You found me in the act. The challenger
You need to seek elsewhere.—I am not he.

Wal. Sir William, he says right.—He challenged not;
But he such provocation gave, as makes
The challenger more the challenged.—He did stain

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A lady's credit, bringing it to naught,
Or causing it to pass for nothing more;
Which trespass capital her brother here,
In form a stripling, but in mind a man,
Indeed demanded reparation for,
Which to exact, my arm assay'd, but fail'd—
For I had woo'd, and won, and, as I thought,
Alone engaged the maid. Sir William, try,
If from that sacred seat of justice, voice
Of solemn adjuration can avail
To bring the truth to light—first, if the maid
Did fall indeed—the knowledge he thereof
Alone possessing—

Sir Wil. No, sir; not alone!—
The maid did never fall!

Wal. Did never fall?
O, ponder what you say!—Not rashly—O,
Not rashly raise a wretch from the abyss
Into the light, to cast him in again
On darkness heaving darkness! Now I faint
With the day-flood that seems to burst upon me!
I say, "that seems," for such transition mocks
The doting of belief!—or heard I right?
Or knew'st thou what thou said'st? or, knowing it,
Knew'st thou didst speak on grounds of solid footing,
Something akin to rock?—It should be rock
Itself, to bear the fabric thou dost raise
Against the sea of doubts that surges on it!
O, did she never fall? Did love itself
Take sides with hate to do her hateful wrong?
To blast her—to abandon her—and leave
A prey to haggard fortune—death or madness?

Sir Wil. Collect thyself, and further audience lend,
Or bid me hold my tongue. The maiden lives.

Wal. Lives? Lives? Is innocent, perhaps, and loves!
O does she?

Sir Wil. Yes.

Wal. Thou seem'st to know what makes
My all, or naught of being! Innocent,
And lives and loves?

Ath. First prove her innocent.

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Sir Wil. He cannot! what of that?—Another can!

Ath. Produce that other.

[SIR WILLIAM *beckons*—LEWSON *enters.*

Lew. Here he is.

Ath. Betrayed!

Wal. He hath confessed—take notice all! The lips
That blurred fair Helen's name hath ope'd themselves,
To damn themselves, and do the maiden right!

Sir Wil. No need confession from that riven wretch!
To that abhorred house thou saw'st her quit,
A letter, as from one she knew and loved,
In mortal strait enticed her. There, assailed
With show of violence from this same man,
That lord premeditated succour brought her,
The whole his foul contrivance! You may leave!
You are known!—What penalty the law awards
For such default, be sure, shall be exacted!

Ath. I do defy you—scorn you! Do your worst!

[*Goes out.*

[HELEN *swooning, is caught by* WALSINGHAM.

Sir Wil. Look to thy mistress, Walsingham.

Wal. Where is she?—
I nothing see except this fainting boy,
Whom help me to restore.

Sir Wil. To wake him up,
Breathe in his ear the name thou lovest most!
Throw back those ebon clusters thoroughly,
And consciousness will start upon thee straight,
Thou never dream'dst of, and thou shalt confess
That love, howe'er it hath a jealous eye,
Hath not a piercing one.

Wal. Herself!—my own!
My sweet!—my idolised!—my innocent
Helen!—her eye-lids quiver—Helen! Helen!
They ope! Dost thou not know me, love? O Heaven,
Die not away again! My soul's true life!
Helen—my gentle one! My patient one!
My faithful one, unwarp'd by rudest strain!
My loving one!—More loving—yes, I say it
That love thee best—more loving yet than loved!
Look at me! Answer me! This semblance but

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Of death, is death itself to me! 'Tis I—
'Tis Walsingham!—'Tis I—repentingly,
Humbly, imploring thee to speak to him,
To look upon him—pity him!—forgive him!
Helen. I love thee, Walsingham. Have all thou ask'st
In that one little word! [*They retire.*

SIR VALENTINE *enters.*

Sir Wil. Sir Valentine!
Sir Val. The same, Sir William Sutton.
Sir Wil. You are welcome.
Sir Val. In strait where things like life and death depend,
Suspense is but the rack—I'll know my fate!
Sir William Sutton, I am come to crave
An audience of your niece.
Sir Wil. Apprise my niece
Sir Valentine de Grey would speak with her.
Sir Val. At thought of sight of that proud form again,
Old motions in me stir—but only stir.
Come other thoughts—they are at once at rest!

HERO *enters, most magnificently attired.*

O what a tower of grace and loveliness,
And stateliness, and absolute command,
She bursts upon mine eyes! Were't tenanted
As I would have it!
Hero. Well, Sir Valentine!
Your will?
Sir Val. I come a promise to redeem,
Thou'lt think most strange, as I do, that did make it.
A suit I have, the gain or loss of which
Depends on thee, although to thee not pleaded!
Shall I be pardon'd, who, against my will,
Past sufferance presume?
Hero. Not mine! Say on.
Sir Val. It is the voice of Ruth! I wonder not
At that—but breathing Ruth's benignity!
Hero. Shall I *entreat* thee say thy wish?

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Sir Val. More bland
The accents yet! Can Ruth have told me right,
And does she love me?
Hero. It doth pain me, sir,
To mark such hesitation, when, to have,
You only have to ask; and, asking, do
A pleasure—giving leave to pleasure you.
Sir Val. [*Aside.*] No strain hath love, if this of other mood.
I win her, and am lost! O gain to lose!
Sir Wil. My niece awaits your question.
Hero. Uncle, peace.
Give him his time—the measure on't his will!
To look for pleasure is itself a pleasure.
But half they feast who to a feast sit down
The moment it is named. Say, that he wait
An hour, why then, so much I banquet more,
And yet fall to with relish.
Sir Val. O such words
To fall from Hero's lips a month before!
Come certainty, whate'er along with it!
Dost thou affect me?
Hero. Yes, Sir Valentine.
Sir Val. Wilt take me for thy husband?
Hero. Yes, again.
Sir Val. Good bye, sweet Ruth!
Hero. Strange welcome this!
Sir Val. Good bye
To sweet content of modest happiness!
Lady, my title's gone!
Hero. For that receive
More hearty welcome than thou gavest to me.
Sir Val. My fortune dwindled.
Hero. As it sinks you rise.
For that receive more hearty welcome yet.
Sir Val. My tastes are altered.
Hero. Tell me what their kind,
They shall be mine—whate'er thy taste, rank, state,
My state, my rank, my tastes, shall be the same!
Sir Val. Then must we wed.—O for that plumed tiar.
The simple hood!—that costly lace, the coif

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Close pinn'd and modest clear!—that gorgeous dress,
The gown embroider'd with humility!
Hero. They are donn'd at thy command, and these
cast off.
Sir Val. And canst thou, too, the vesture of the
That made thee cherish these, cast off? [mind
Hero. I can!
Hard things which love cannot for love perform.
Sir Val. Such bounty should enrich.—Alas! for me,
Who, spite of all its granting, must be poor.
Clever. [*Entering.*] Friend Ruth, the dinner waits.—
Friend Peter here!
And to the world, like thee, gone back again!
Then change of gear for me! Bold serving-man,
Who would be other than his betters are!
No more, friend Obadiah—know me hence
For Master Clever, name and nature one!
Sir Val. Have I but dreamt 'tis night, and is it day!
A masque is it I have been acting in,
And known it not? Canst thou be both, yet one?
Is Ruth but Hero—Hero even Ruth?
Then welcome Hero for the sake of Ruth,
And Ruth more welcome yet for Hero's sake!
And is it so?—or does the fable end
In cold return to dull reality?
Hero. No; in reality that's born of it
And is its fairer likeness!—real grown
What first was only seeming. I have become
The part, I lately play'd; the thing I was
Before, have ceased to be! Such virtue hath
The only show of virtue! For which change
Thy noble nature do I thank, although
Perhaps with more than prudent jealousy
Exacting; and precipitate, where patience
Might well have counsell'd pause. With Hero's form,
Take Ruth's contentment and humility—
Their dress, whate'er your love would have it be!
But here is one unchanged, nor needing change,
[*To* HELEN.
Except where seeming goes for next to naught!
My Helen! thou art happy now!

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Helen. I am!

Wal. And I, that scarce deserve my happiness!
But what shall make me misbeliever hence?
How could I doubt thee! Strong appearances
By stronger vouchers back'd, it was, that made me.
But that detected now—and these explain'd—
Thy virtue rises like a pyramid
I wonder aught could hide!—A life of trust
Shall for a season of misgiving pay thee!
Yet more I have to say—of that anon—
For guests are here you thought not of before,
On whom your feast that waits for us depends—
Marr'd, if disrelish'd,—made, if they're content!

THE END.

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TEADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

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THE SECRETARY.

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THE

SECRETARY.

A Play,

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES,

AUTHOR OF "THE HUNCHBACK," ETC.

LONDON:

EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.

MDCCCXLIII.

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LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

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TO

JOHN FORSTER, ESQUIRE,

IN

GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF MANY ACTS OF KINDNESS RENDERED

TO THE AUTHOR,

IN

THE COURSE OF HIS DRAMATIC CAREER,

This Play

IS DEDICATED.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

To Mr. JAMES's able Novel of the "KING'S HIGHWAY," I am indebted for the Plot of this Drama, and I take this opportunity of acknowledging my obligation in this particular respect, and also of thanking the distinguished Author for many an hour of sweet instructive beguilement, enjoyed in the perusal of his productions.

For his careful revision of the MS. and for superintending the press, I return my hearty acknowledgments to my friend W. A. Dow, Esq., King's Bench Walk, Temple.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

The King	Mr. Ryder.
Duke of Gaveston	Mr. G. Bennett.
Lord Sherbrooke	Mr. Hudson.
Lord Byerdale	Mr. Phelps.
Lord Sunbury	Mr. Waldron.
Sir George Barkley	Mr. Graham.
Sir Richard Fenwick	Mr. Lynne.
Sir John Friend	Mr. Mellon.
Sir William Parkyn	Mr. Roberts.
Colonel Green	Mr. Macready.
Wilton	Mr. Anderson.
Harrison	Mr. Lambert.
Charnock	Mr. C. J. Smith.
Armstrong	Mr. Selby.
Williams	Mr. Yarnold.
Page	Mr. Stanton.
Lady Laura Gaveston	Miss Helen Faucit.
Emmeline	Mrs. Wigan.

Conspirators, &c. &c.

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THE SECRETARY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—LORD BYERDALE'S *Study.*—WILTON *seated at a table in the act of writing.—Several folded letters before him, other letters lying open, papers, &c.*

Wil.—THAT memory should feed itself! wax stronger
In its impression, without agency
Of that which wrought it; till the simulation—
For e'en so much it is—grows palpable
As the original—holds commune with
Our ears and eyes, yet all's within ourself!
At first her image was a dreamy thing
That came and went, and might, for aught I deem'd,
Have gone for ever—now 'tis ever with me!
Substantial presence! steadfast constancy!
I write, I read, I talk, and breaking off
In listless absence, to myself return
In company with her! She is my theme
That supersedes all others! Why is this?
What do I nourish? Hope in spite of hope!
Madness of wishes—never to be bless'd!
Her groom is not beneath her more than I,
The secretary of a haughty lord!
His clerk!—that in his counsels holds no share
More than his pen! What better should I be,
A man who claims no core of kith or kin
In the wide world! I had a friend—a good
And gracious one—who foster'd me, to play
A higher part. Compell'd by urgent cause

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To travel, to this lord he left the care
Of my advancement—left, as to a friend!
But friends at second-hand are doubtful ones!
Where will it end?—O perfect imaging
Of sweetness!—grace! Aspect of soul and form
Most rich in all that man desires in woman!
Rare excellence!—Why, where am I again?
Along with her! Gazing upon her—rapt
With marvel at the glory of her presence!

LORD BYERDALE *enters.—Stops short, and stands observing* WILTON'S *abstraction.—Advances and addresses him impatiently.*

Lord By. So! Are those letters finished?

Wil. But the seals
And superscriptions.

Lord By. Get them out of hand!
He grows abstracted. Lady Laura's tone
Had matter in it when she ask'd for him.
Why minds he me of her? She values much,
I hear, the service which he render'd her.
A man of prowess is my secretary,
And presence too! 'Tis not of her he thinks?
Think of an Empress!—Does she think of him?
A lady with a will, as I am told!
A judge of merits!—does not take a year
To tell her mind!—That children should have minds!
Be she not of the mind to wed my son,
When he shall sue her—which he shall to-day—
Look to't his Grace of Gaveston! He must plot!
He would reseat the Stuart!—Would he so?
Eyes are upon his Grace he wots not of!
She ask'd for Wilton—never named my son!
The very man, indeed, he is wherewith
Romancists matches disproportionate
Contract—wed pages with their mistresses!
Would my Lord Sunbury had kept at home,
Not palm'd on me his seemly *protégé!*
He roams to France, and finds a prison there!
There's something in his presence troubles me.
So sat my brother when he play'd the clerk,
With sword on thigh, rather than pen in hand;

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You saw the soldier, whatsoe'er he did!
Is it his son? I shall be soon resolved;
My trusty messenger returns to-day.
Wil. [*rising*]. My lord, they are ready.
Lord By. Go and post them, Sir,
With your own hand. Tarry, Sir; you will pass
His Grace of Gaveston's house; and should you call—
Wil. Call *there*, my lord?
Lord By. Yes; you do call there?
Wil. No.
Lord By. You have been there?
Wil. No, my lord.
Lord By. Go, post the letters!
[WILTON *goes out.*
How far above his errand is his gait!
I could believe my brother living still,
And striding forth the door!—He goes not there.
'Tis well he's modest! Will there come the day
When I shall see him knocking at the gate
As though he were at home? Would he were hence!
Why did I ever see him? Ha! Who's come?
[*To* WILLIAMS, *who enters.*
Wil. My lord, your messenger to Ireland sent.
Lord By. Admit him. Fear or hope is now at end.
Welcome! What bring you?
[*To* HARRISON, *who enters.*
Har. [*giving papers*]. For your lordship these.
Lord By. [*To* HARRISON, *who goes out*]. Go, get refresh'd! (*Reads*) "They never reach'd the ship!—
Landed again ten miles below the creek!"
They told me false, then. Gold finds out the truth!
So both survived! But Leonard now is dead,
And for the nephew—thanks to self-will'd love—
He breathes without men's leave! What fear I, then?
What tho' he be my eldest brother's son!
[*Goes out.*

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SCENE II.—*Hyde Park.*

Enter COLONEL GREEN *and* WILTON.

Wil. Sir, I would walk alone—Men may take leave
To choose their own acquaintance! Frankly, you
Are hardly to my taste—what are you, sir?
Green. What am I?—Why, the man that wears this suit,
That owns this trunk, these thews, these features!—Well!
Are you content?—or would you learn my name
And family? Beware, sir! Tell your own.
Wil. I cannot!
Green. You are right!—To say "No more
Can I," were flippantly to answer you;
Still, as I yet have held it wisdom, when
With wit or truth we must part company,
To let the lighter go, I claim the knowledge
Which you confess to lack.
Wil. You know my name
And family?
Green. I know my own.
Wil. Not mine!
Green. What then? Is't matter for despondency?
Wil. The man that toils along a weary road
Beneath a burthen, and, miscounting, thinks
The time is come, at last, to lay it down,
With weight augmented takes it up again
To bear it forward still.
Green. You are not yet
Of age.
Wil. How know you that?
Green. What matter how,
So that I know? The knowledge on't is neither
Murder nor theft! It might be treason—but
It is not that. What friend have you beside
The Earl of Sunbury?

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Wil. How know you he's
My friend?
Green. Why ply a bootless labour twice?
I know it. That content you!—Who besides
Rank in the list, more, often, fill than ought?
Wil. I count but one—Lord Sherbrooke.
Green. Son of him
You're secretary to—Lord Byerdale.
Wil. You seem to know me well!
Green. I seem?—I do.
Lord Byerdale!—Is he your friend too?
Wil. No.
Green. Nor friend to any who deserve a friend!
Wil. Who are you, sir?
Green. You have been bred at college.
You have won honours there—and high ones, too.
A college is a place to sharpen wit,
Or ought to be.—A slight hint should suffice;
And yet, it seems, you cannot take a broad one.
Wil. Sir, I love openness and honour.
Green. Right,
And so do I. I mean you not to know me!
So much for openness!—and, as to honour,
Judge me as you find me!
Wil. Thereby judging you,
How shall I rate you in the property
In question last; when, calmly looking on,
You suffer'd lawless violence to leaguer
A noble lady and her sire, nor stirr'd
A finger to their rescue?
Green. Motives, sir,
Give shape to facts, which often changes them
To things the most diverse to what they seem.
Thus far know mine—I weigh'd the risk, was run,
And framed my conduct to the amount of it.
A score of crowns to needy gentlemen
Was worth, perhaps, the violence they did
Their better natures, so to practise on
A lady's fright. In these disjointed times,
Try as you may, things will not go by rule!
William of Nassau fills the throne to-day—

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Wil. [*interrupting him*]. Long may he fill it, sir,
and hand it down
An heir-loom with a people's guarantee
To an unfailing race!
Green. [*vehemently*]. Youth, 'twas not thus!—
[*Checks himself.*
But those who left you in your infancy,
To take the course which others counted best
Have but themselves to thank! I'll not be one
To check the faith that now must bear thee through!
Wil. You are a man of honour.
Green. By my foes
I have been counted so. Where left we off?
Where it were best we leave the argument.
Wil. One word, sir, to go back.
Green. Say on!
Wil. From what
You said just now, I think I must have friends
I know not of—
Green. You have.
Wil. Who are they?
Green. Yet
You may not know.
Wil. But shall I ever know?
Green. As sure as life holds on with them and you.
Now to the cause that makes you jealous of me—
My passive bearing at a certain time.
Your arm achieved what mine forebore to do.
Mark me!—forebore!—rescued the noble sire
And yet more noble child.
Wil. More noble?
Green. Yes;
Better! You have seen them?
Wil. No.
Green. You would be welcome.
Hast thought upon the maid?—I see thou hast.
Wil. Sir!
Green. Are you vapour? Do I see you now,
And now are you away?
Wil. What mean you, sir?
Green. A minute since I was a man of honour!

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Wil. You are so still.
Green. And such shall be approved.
So trust you me!—Hast thought upon the maid?
Wil. I have!
Green. 'Twas fit!—'Twas fair!—'Twas paying back
What you received—for she has thought of you!
Mark!—At the moment that you stood her friend
She grew your love!—Youth's in a blaze, and sees
Not half what is about it!—When to flight
You put her enemies, you little thought
That, after all your pains, the maid was robb'd!
Wil. Robb'd!—
Green. Of her heart—I saw it on the arm
Where but her figure seem'd to hang, the while
You led her to the carriage.
Wil. Do you know
Who was the lady?
Green. Daughter to the Duke
Of Gaveston.
Wil. Yes; and I an humble man!
Green. You are not an humble man—that is—I am right!—
And stand to what I say—a man that owns
A noble soul is not an humble man,
In the poor sense wherein the sapient world
Mouths out the trite and questionable phrase!
Wil. Who are you, sir?—Forgive me!—I'm content
To know you by your thoughts.
Green. Whereto I'll add
My deeds, in time, with every adjunct else!
Hie to the duke's! He owes thee benefit;
And welcome will he give thee as a friend,
Tho' dull to what's to come, as dawn to day
When the sun's up and glow is turn'd to fire!
His daughter pines for sight of him again,
Whom the first sight did so commend, all else
To vision is a blank! I say again
Thou art no humble man! Revolve my words
With boldest spirit.—Dare and you shall win!
My counsel needing, or my help, this scrawl

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Will prove your guide, although a homely one.
'Tire never yet was flesh and blood, no more
Than mind and heart! The man is still the man!
[*Goes out.*

Wil. As fanning wind will bring to blaze again
The fire we thought was out, but only smoulder'd;
So, at his word, my only smother'd hopes
Revive when, doting, I believed them dead.
Here Sherbrooke comes—indeed my hearty friend,
But, for my humour, all too light a one.

Enter SHERBROOKE.

Sher. So, master secretary, health to you!
If health you wish—for he's a fool who serves
A man against his humour—the right road
To make an enemy! Each man has his bliss
According to his nature. One will mope;
A squadron could not drag him to a feast!
Leave him, good soul, alone, with knees to chin,
Feet on the fender, sitting all a-heap
Over the embers winking in the grate!
He's happy!—With the spleen another man
Is smitten—champions it as cavalier
His lady-love! "Have at you, sir!" would you come
Betwixt him and his humour. Do you see
That scowl! It is his mistress' favour which
He wears with thin and bitter curling lip,
All the year round, spite of the laughing sun.
And why not, sir? He is a happy man!
As happy as he can be!—Let him be!
And there are men, saving your reverence,
Who, with the thorax sound as a new drum,
Waste with the melting rheum—would you believe
them?
With trunks like culverins, and limbs of brawn,
They shake with rigors at a thorough air!
No month but brings its proper malady,
Of which they're sure to die!—yet do they live,
And sleep, and wake, and talk, and eat, and drink,
Until perhaps some nostrum makes an end!—
Yet are they happy, sir, in their own way.

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Wil. These are anomalies 'mongst men.
Sher. Not so:
The world's made up of such! Few wisely live.
The wise man, sir, is the anomaly!
Wil. You're in the mood contemplative to-day.
Sher. I am—I am about to seek a wife.
Why do you start?—I do not say to take one.
Wil. About to wed?
Sher. My father wills it so.
But fathers do not settle marriage brawls:
A pity, then, they settle marriages.
Better their children. Men complain the less,
When, for their cares, they have to thank themselves.
Wil. And may I know the lady?
Sher. You have met her.
Wil. Met her!—
Sher. Let's see. *The time was evening. 'Twas*
A lone sequester'd spot.—Couldn't I write
A deep romance?—*A fear-bewilder'd sire*
And shrieking damsel, by a lawless band
Beset.—A situation!—Who comes in?
The hero of my story—or the book
Is matter for the fire! *So in he comes!*
Alone? Of course alone—most hero-like!
One against five!—Twenty were few as five,—
No hero ever takes account of odds!
Is he o'erpowered? Not if the scribe has thews.
His blows fell two, his eyes flash down the rest;
Beauty and Age—weak guardian of such store—
Are rescued in the very nick of time!
Fraud its inglorious field inglorious flies,
And Age is free to hobble. Not so Beauty;
For Beauty's soft of heart and frail of limb,
And like to swoon in an extremity;
Which, if the author sees not, he hath got
A cataract, and couch his eyes for him
With his own pen!—I am not such a one.
When I do write a book, I write a book!
The lady needs support,—who yields it her?
The hero 'fore the king, were the king by!
Upon the hero leans the heroine!

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At first half willingly—more willingly
Anon,—anon with all her heart and soul,—
And so, and so, and so, is borne away!
You'll read my work and give it a good name?
Why, what's the matter, man? You're dumb and pale.
Heavens! if the first step overpowers you so,
How will you mount my climax as it towers?
Wilton!
Wil. My lord?
Sher. My friend!—I brook not lord!
Or call me "Sherbrooke"—that's the friendly mode.
What gaze you at in vacancy? A phantom?
Wilton, it is a phantom that you see.
If aught that gives you pain—I would not wed
The Lady Laura Gaveston!
Wil. What is she
To me?
Sher. Nothing—if not the self-same thing
You are to her. Wilton, she has lost her heart,
And you have got it.
Wil. Sherbrooke——
Sher. That's the word!
Shake hands, man! Listen! At the play last night
I sat with her. She spoke a library,
If "yea" and "nay" make volumes. Only once
The scene attracted her. The heroine
Was rescued by her lover. Had you heard
The sighs with which she follow'd, step by step,
The progress of the touching incident!—
My book shall beat it, though!—If you feel, speak!
Or is it that you feel too much to speak?
Do you note me, Wilton? All the rest of the time
Her eyes kept traversing the tiers, as though
In quest of one they sought but could not find;
For ne'er they fix'd, save when there oped a door,
And then they turn'd away to range again!—
The wish'd one came not in!—a circumstance
Of tender implication to dilate on.
I'll turn it to account!—My book is writ!—
And at the close, when on the vestibule
We hung awhile to wait her hinder'd coach,

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Jove! how she scann'd the beaux!—Some management
To make that pass with prudes, who read aloud—
And when the steps at last gave note to mount,
How with a sigh she went all listless in,
Scarce giving me Good night!
Wil. How know you whom
She look'd for, if she look'd for any one?
Sher. By this and this. First, her absorption at
That critical and memory-stirring scene,
The counterpart of one which you and she
Enacted once with marvellous effect—
Methinks a document!—In the next place,
The potency of certain words as plain
As "Wilton Brown"—no kin at all to famed
Abracadabra!—to enchain her ear
And make the blood with ebb and flow enact
The tide upon the haven of her cheek,
And hold her lips disparted like to those
Who stint their breath with thrilling of a tale;
As with her father I discuss'd a point
Touching the argument, whereon I mean
To take my stand 'mongst literary men!—
And, add to this as proof superlative,
Her tongue is never weary of your name,
Which, once 'tis broach'd, she more and more repeats,
Like strain that grows on us the more 'tis sung!
Wilton, the Lady Laura loves you, man!
Wil. Sherbrooke, remember, I'm an humble man!
Sher. You are not an humble man!
Wil. Again! How 's this?
I am bewilder'd—
Sher. Love is not a plain,
But an entangling maze.
Wil. I do not speak
Of love. You say I am no humble man.
Sher. And say 't again.
Wil. Your father's secretary!
Sher. And what am I that am my father's son?
Intrinsically humbler far than you.
Wilton, think boldly of yourself!
Wil. Again!

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Look here—As now you speak so spoke the man
Who gave me this. [*Showing a paper.*
Sher. Let's see it!—"Colonel Green—
At the Green Dragon"—challenge for St. George!
And you, an humble man!
Wil. What man is he
Who gave me that?
Sher. [*Returning the paper.*] An honourable one;
Albeit he draws not sword when he beholds
A lady leaguer'd on the King's highway.
Wil. Is he of the craft?
Sher. There, breathe at ease,
He is not. Wilton, sound men drive that trade.
Don't wonder!—When a kingdom's upside down,
What man can say he is to-day himself
As he was yesterday? The battle's chance
Brings change of pockets—light for heavy ones;
Lank purses; or, for old ones, but their room;
New masters to old mansions, and so forth!
I do not justify, I but excuse.
There is at times a conscience in offence,
For which the best abate the penalty.
But to my Dulcinea and her Knight!
My father wills I go and woo the fair.
I go and woo, but you must come and win!
Wil. What! Go along with you? No!—not a step,
When Honour doth forbid!
Sher. Forbid the prude
To waste her breath until she sees the strait.
Wil. To 'scape the strait 'twere best to shun it.
Sher. So,
The navigator never had gone through!
Wilton, you 'll helm it, spite of shoal and rock,
And laugh beyond in the bright open sea!
I 'll have you come with me!—Nay, scowl away!
What! jealousy!—nip friendship, will you?—but
You shall not, by this honest arm and hand!
Come on!
Wil. Nay, Sherbrooke—
Sher. Nay, come on!—Come on!
[*Goes out, forcing* Wilton *with him.*

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ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Chamber in the* DUKE OF GAVESTON'S *house.*

Enter the DUKE.

Duke. How changed my daughter is!—I know her not
Since our adventure on the king's highway.
Or love has turn'd her wits for her, or fright.
The stay'd recluse of yesterday, to-day
Is lady of the crowd! She now frequents
Assemblies—plays—all haunts of throng'd resort.
What draws her forth so much? I can't surmise!
But from herself the knowledge of the cause
Of such a metamorphosis can come.
For quiet, restlessness!—from books to sights!
I 'll tax her home upon it. She 's obedient;
Yet, once her purpose fix'd, is hard to move.
Suitor she never brook'd!—men's merits, still
Has thought, should ever 'bove their stations mount.
I had a fear—but no!—But once they met—
The heart forgets when cease the eyes to prompt.
See where she thoughtful moves with eyes on ground!
Another time—when she 's in lighter mood.
Her heart, upon its guard, might foil me now.
[*Goes out.*

Enter LADY LAURA.

Lady Lau. Where does he hide, while gallants, not his tithe
In manly bearing, beauty and desert,
Vie for the lead, and with comparisons
Set all the world at odds?—Let him appear
Among them, all will shrink at once to one!
The world will be one eye, one ear, one tongue,
Awarding him the palm past all compare.
Or would it slight his merits for his rank?
What of his rank?—Is 't his disparagement
That Fortune's blind?—Let Fortune take the blame—

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Or rather men, who laud, where she prefers,
Even while they know she sees not what she does.
Why, let them like idolaters bow down
Before the works of their own hands!—Love bends
At Heaven's command alone—informing Love!
Honest and clear of sight, whose piercing eye
Vies with the lapidary's—knows the gem
Whate'er the setting! Strange that I, a maid,
Who held her single state so sovereignly
No suitor ever twice drew near to woo,
Should now regard it as a barren sway,
Dominion of some far and desert isle,
Which he who owns it gladly would exchange
For slavery in some blest continent!
Love, if I slighted thee, thou 'rt well revenged;
I 'm all thy subject now; but for my gains
Have nought, except my servitude, to boast,
Denied exchange of speech or sight with him
Who made me doff defiance of thy rule!

Enter EMMELINE.

Emme. Lord Sherbrooke, madam, and a friend—
Lady Lau. A friend?
What! has his friend no name?—No lofty one,
Or he 'd be sure to give it!—Show him in.
Stay! Do you know the gentleman that comes
Along with him?
Emme. Not, as I think, my lady.
His back was towards me, but I dare be sworn
He has a noble presence.
Lady Lau. To be sure!
He comes in noble company. The sun
Makes vapours that are near him turn to gold!
Go!—[EMMELINE *goes out.*] I am sick of you and all the world!—
And all the world!—I would the jest were o'er!
The poor—poor jest, that so misplaces things,
We know not what we look at! Everywhere,
Except in human nature, qualities
Determine uses.—No one sets to build
A garden wall to train a sloe or crab,

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Or rears a thistle in a hot-house bed!
Well, well! if essences, in other things,
Keep rule, 'tis fit perhaps they jumble men.
I'm sick of life! 'Tis one against the million,
So let the million have its way!—It will!
Lord weds with lady.—Why?—Because a lord!
A common match would find a better reason!
Yet no; 'tis rank all through—nothing but rank!
Craft weds with craft—profession with profession.
Weddings for clothes! From top to bottom all's
At odds with reason! Human life is ravel'd,
And love itself can't make the thread run clear.
The work that only frets 'twere best give o'er;
Only don't help to make the puzzle worse!
Let the world be! It is too old to mend;
What 'tis, it was, and will be to the end!

[EMMELINE *enters, conducting* WILTON *and* SHERBROOKE, *and retires.*

Sher. Madam, I take leave to present myself,
And, with myself, my friend.

Lady Lau. Your friend and you,
My lord, are welcome in all courtesy.

Sher. [*aside to* WILTON.] A welcome for a lover!
Mark you that?
An answer, too, before the question's put!
She never raised her eyes—that's hope! They say
A maid in love still goes with downcast looks.
But she may lock her vision in her heart;
And, if she does, I'll stake my coronet
You're there along with it.

Wil. [*uneasily.*] Accost her, Sherbrooke!

Sher. And if I do, what shall I say to her?
That 'tis a fair day?—that 'tis very warm?
Or very cool?—Or that I hope she's well,
And hope his Grace, her father, is the same?
That the new fashions are come out, and belles,
To please their beaux, now meet them with sour looks?
That beaux, to wive, come wooing for their friends?
That, now-a-days, things find their proper way
By going contrary?—a paradox!
Or that the world is in its childhood yet,

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And hopes to come to manhood—if it lives ?
Or what ? Come, Wilton, you take up the word,
And help a man that can't get through his task !
Speak to her, Wilton—Wish her a good morning !
Say anything to her.
Lady Lau. A fine day, my lord !
The tables turn when ladies must speak first. [*Aside.*
Sher. Madam, the day is very fine indeed ;
At least, I think so. But what thinks my friend ?—
For he is a philosopher, and knows
Fine weather is the kind that 's wanted most.
A calm is fine—the sailor wants a breeze :
Sunshine is fine—the farmer wants a cloud :
One looks for frost, another looks for snow,
Another looks for rain—though none for sleet !
Their uses make the excellence of things ;
At least, I think so, madam. What thinks Wilton ?
Lady Lau. Wilton !
Wil. Nay, Sherbrooke.
Sher. I will have you speak !
Madam, my friend is very weatherwise.
You call it a fine day, and so do I ;
But come, what think you, Wilton ?
Lady Lau. It is he !
Oh, sir, I 'm glad to see you !—very glad !
Tho' somewhat too confused to show how glad.
Because—because—I saw you not at once—
And—find you standing—and his lordship, too—
Pray you excuse a moping, absent girl,
And let her make amends—and—Pray take chairs !
Sher. [*aside to* WILTON]. I might have dropp'd,
you see, if not for you.
Now will I court her to your very face !
Fair Lady Laura Gaveston !
Lady Lau. [*coldly*]. Well, my lord ?
Sher. My friend suspects the weather.
Wil. [*aside to* SHERBROOKE]. Nay !
Sher. You do.
He thinks tho' now so fine there 's chance of hail ;
For it is April, as you know—a month
When here will be a shower, and sunshine there ;

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So one goes dry, another dripping wet.
The sky's a puzzle; but there are stranger things!
You know my errand, Lady Laura; still
I tell it you to show I know it too;
And, for your answer, that I well foresee,
But would not baulk your bright lips of their right
To speak, themselves, the will of her they serve.
My father hither sends his hopeful son—
Although in hopeless mood—to seek a wife.
I say, *in hopeless mood;* for bonds, you know,
Although they be of silk, are things that bind;
And, to be plain, I love my liberty!
I 'll make but a poor husband at the best;
But, if you will, I'll make the best I can.
I court you, lady, for my father's sake,
In the first place—a son can say no less;
In the next place, I court you for your own:
A lover, I presume, can say no more.
Now, as I know brief wooing prospers best,
One way or t'other bringing to an end
What else had cost much time, were better saved;
My courtship, promptly, as you see, begun,
I bring as promptly to a graceful close.
But as 'tis fit my merits you should know—
The proper ground of failure or success—
And as wise men speak little of themselves,
But trust, in these regards, to others' tongues;
The blanks which I have left, and not a few,
I leave my friend in kindness to fill up!
Wilton, I 'll wait you in the ante-room.

Wil. [*rising*]. Sherbrooke—

Sher. [*pushing him down again*]. Nay, take your seat again. For shame!

What! Frighted of a lady's company?
Or, madam, is the gentleman to stay
At my request—or do you wish him gone?

Lady Lau. The gentleman will stay—at my request!

Sher. [*aside to* WILTON]. Wilton, what think you of the weather now?

Madam, I dare be bound he 'll do your will,
Tho' 'twere not back'd by mine—I take my leave;

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And with the more content, because I know—
And here I speak the bare and steadfast truth—
I leave with you the man—I boast my friend.
[*Goes out.*

Lady Lau. Sir, you will deem me bold to wish you stay;
Yet, sooth, the blame is yours. When creditors
Are modest, and hold off, the debtor's shamed
That comes not forth—if not to pay his debt,
At least to grace it with acknowledgment!

Wil. You owe me nothing, lady.

Lady Lau. Nothing!—No!—
And weighs my life, sir, nothing in your eyes?
Although perhaps a trifle in my own!

Wil. Your life!—O, lady!—

Lady Lau. Well, sir?—Well?—Say on!
Is't nothing?—Yet my gratitude's a heap;
But that, perhaps, is nothing!

Wil. Were't deserved,
So much—save one thing—I could wish no more!

Lady Lau. I will believe you!
Yet let me ask why what you valued so
You took no pains to learn was render'd you?—
Don't speak!—I know!—the true desert holds back!
Ere reach for its reward, would let it go!
Yet, in my own defence I must be frank,
And tell you I have wish'd to see you, sir;
Nor once, but oft; nor much, but earnestly,
To tell you all I feel I owe you, sir;
And still, tho' I defended you just now,
Charging your absence to the proper cause,
Yet must you bear some blame—for though you had
Your feelings, sir, we had our feelings too,
For which 'twere not unjust to credit us;
Which crediting, 'twere hardly generous
To grieve with needless pain;—our name—abode
My father gave you—so methinks did I.
They were not idly given, but for a purpose;
They were not coldly given, but heartily;
They meant an invitation—It is true
'Twas not accepted by your lips, and yet
I thought your looks gave token of as much.

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If I thought wrong, I grieve for my mistake—
I would not think you never meant to come!
Wil. 'Twas true!
Lady Lau. 'Twas strange!—To risk your life for us,
Yet grudge a step to see—that we were well.
Wil. I heard that you were well—I knew you were.
Lady Lau. And that contented you. Sir, I have friends
I know are well, yet I would see them too.
But then, they are dear friends—you are very right.
'Twere almost bold to say we are acquaintance;
Yet, though you think me forward, I shall say
We were not losers did you rate us more.
Wil. More?—O much more!—More than I dare to name!
Lady Lau. [*aside*]. I could believe the heart that 's in my breast
Did throb just now in his—I am beloved!
Sir, you say nothing, or you say too much—
I mean too much for faith.—More than acquaintance—
Would be a friend—much more were—more than that—
O lips, be mute—when looks can talk so well!
The more his tongue refrains, the more he speaks!
Wil. O, were I sure—
Lady Lau. Of what?
Wil. That I could claim
A *royal* stock!
Lady Lau. What then?—Be frank!—What then?
Wil. Why then I might to lady high as you
Proffer my heart.
Lady Lau. You then would condescend!
And, think you, none can condescend but you?
Would'st like me—for a friend?
Wil. No!
Lady Lau. No?
Wil. A friend
Lies near the heart; but then there is the core
That looks for something else.
Lady Lau. Which you have found!
No?
Wil. Yes!

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Lady Lau. A mistress?
Wil. Yes!
Lady Lau. Where does she bide?
Wil. Where does she bide! O Honour, is it right
To take advantage of the love for us
That would undo itself—descend for us
From state—make partnership with namelessness—
Convert high veneration into scorn—
Quit the bright pageant of emblazon'd life,
To play a poor part in the daily crowd?
Lady Lau. Nothing!—All nothing!
Wil. Cast itself away—
Give all—gain naught—unless abasement's gain—
Naught but a heart, which any one could give?
Lady Lau. No!—only one—worth all that ever beat
Cheap purchased with her own!
Wil. [*aside.*] O, generous maid!
And shall I take thy sterling gold for dross?
I must, or I must fly! Lady, farewell!
Lady Lau. Stay! You have stopp'd too long to go
so soon!
Was there not something to be said? A word
About your friend? Well, sir; sit down and say it.
Wil. My friend is noble.
Lady Lau. Ay! He is noble, is he?
Has he a heart?
Wil. A brave, and warm one, too!
A man more modest than he loves to show.
Lady Lau. Sir, let him show the most he may, I'll find
The man will prove him very braggart there,—
A man to love whom is to boast one's self,
So is he challenge of all nobleness!
A man who rescued once a lady's life;
Who, for the chance of such salvation only,
Would risk that life again 'gainst twice the odds!
Why do you hang your head? Desert for shame!
Assert yourself, erect your brow, and cast
A thousand round you down, that only tower
Because you please to droop! O doubtful pass
To come to!—for a maiden unenforced
To tell her love!—What can be urged for her?

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What can she urge herself?—Why this, that Heaven
Inform'd her; so she knew its handiwork,
And worshipp'd Heaven in it!—Almost, and more
Than once, you 've said you loved me, but stopp'd short!
I hold a virtue higher than a grace,
So prefer honesty to bashfulness—
As, by this time, perhaps, you more than guess:
Then, where you halted, will I e'en go on,
And tell you—yet why need I?—all is said
But the plain downright word, which, if I speak,
I shall not make you wise a tittle more;
Yet *'tis the word*, and I will out with it—
You love me, Wilton, and 'tis love for love!
Why, Wilton, where 's your heart?
Wil. Here at your feet!
Lady Lau. Then 'tis a contract.
Wil. Yes.
Lady Lau. How long to last?
Wil. For life.
Lady Lau. No less a term!—Were 't but a jot
Shorter than that, I 'd have the compact torn
And scatter'd to the winds! For life?
Wil. For life! [*The* DUKE OF GAVESTON *enters.*
Lady Lau. Then, Wilton, I am yours. But mark me, yet;
My father cannot wed me 'gainst my will—
Against my father's will I'll never wed—
If I wed ever, Wilton, 'tis with you!
Duke. What means this, daughter?
Lady Lau. Did you overhear?
Duke. I did! For shame!
Lady Lau. Nay, father, say for shame
When I recal what you did overhear!
What I'll repeat, nor pay, nor owe, a blush!
You are a duke—I am your grace's child.
We both are debtors to this gentleman
To an amount that's something near the worth
Of both our lives!—You oft have mention'd him
With gratitude—and, what you spoke, I felt,
And call'd to mind the time when heroes wore
The trophies that they won, tho' emperors';

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And wish'd—ay did I, from my heart's deep core—
Such times were now for him. Up to him, father!
Give him the generous hand. If fault there is,
The penalty be mine—o'erleap the gap
Rank sets between you—reverence the thing
You owe your title to—whereby alone
The ancestor that sent it down to you
Won it!—Desert!—The stamp were, else, a brand!

Duke. I own myself your grateful debtor, sir,
And what I owe you, sir, I would repay;
And pray you take my hand as warranty,
Which, as I reckon you a man of honour,
I think you know the proper limits of,
And, knowing, will respect them.—Sir, your leave
To hold some brief communion with my child,
As what has pass'd behoves her to review!

Lady Lau. Wilton, 'twas all review'd before it pass'd.
Father, I utter it with reverence
To you!—It was no idle passing thought—
A seedling just appearing above ground,
A foot could mock of growth and sweep away;
But a deep, fibrous, and abounding root,
Which, tearing up, you tear up all the ground,
And that is—all my heart!—With this, farewell!
What fruit the tree may bear but time can tell!

[*They go out severally.*

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ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Lord Byerly's Study.*

Enter LORD SHERBROOKE *and* WILTON.

Sher. A maid of mettle, Wilton!—a warm heart,
And honest too—too noble in her wish,
To stint her tongue. She does not mew her love,
As thus, *A well-deserving gentleman,*
She'd fain believe. Deny it, she would swear to't;
She would!—*sufficient comely*—all the while
She thinks him paragon. *A man, no doubt,*
A lady might affect!—while she is smit
Beyond all doubt! "*A very proper stature;*
What some would call a straight and well-shaped man!"
Companion e'en for him of Belvidere!
One whom a maiden might for husband take!
When she has married him the hundredth time
That morning, conning o'er the ceremony,
And, louder than the clerk gives out the psalm,
Chaunting *obey!*—A well-conducted maid!
Spring on her lips—a very backward Spring!
And in her heart Midsummer!—Out upon it!
The love, that knows 'tis justified, is wrong
To hang its head, and droop its lids and make
Its lips a jailer's porch that opes by halves,
In constant watch of whom it may let out—
Sure token that delinquents bide within!
'Tis even as I say. My eager sire
Has got his answer. She will none of me;
Nor stops she there, but all the truth avows.
Her heart is pledged to you!—She will be wife
To none, but Wilton Brown.

Wil. Declared she that?

Sher. Yes; soon as urged thereon,
From something stronger than a hint, the duke
In converse with my father dropp'd.

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Wil. And gave
The duke no promise to enforce your suit?
Sher. My father's suit, you mean. None, Wilton; but
Excused himself on fair and valid grounds—
A pledge unto a dying mother given
Ne'er to coerce her child's affections.
Wil. How
Brooks my good lord your father, the o'erturn
Of what he plann'd with so much care, and thought
Beyond mischance assur'd?
Sher. I fear to speak,
When what I ought to speak lacks reverence,
And to a name revered! Content thee, Wilton.
Bethink thee of a heart o'erfraught with hate,
Revenge, aught else in passion's murky list,
And guess how brooks my father his baulk'd wish!
He will be here anon!—Look to the duke!
You may befriend him, and I know you would,
Tho' now the let that keeps you from your hopes!
Spin volumes out of hints—and, Wilton, mind,
Inquires my father how I bear myself
On this reverse, you tell him I am sped—
Gone in the dumps—in doubt to hang or drown;
That I do mumble horrors to myself,
Biting my nails—portent of direst things!
That I am clean distraught, and measure rather
For a strait jacket than a coat and vest!
A man, in brief, whose wits are out o' sorts;
And so it is!—for is it not enough
To drive one mad, when one's content, with frets
To try and make him more content? I hate
A man to fill my cup till it runs o'er!
Wilton, farewell!—Report me, if you love me,
Not what I am, but what I should be.—Mind,
Keep eye on the well-being of the duke! [*Goes out.*
Wil. There 's danger toward the duke. I do not blame
His slight of me!—Did I not slight myself?
Rebuke my love?—forbid my hopes to look
For entertainment at their master's hands?
Owe the duke grudge?—I bear ill will to none;
My heart is all astonishment and love.

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The Earl!—My task [*sits down*]. Look to the duke?
I'll look
To my own honour—then is all assured!

Enter LORD BYERDALE.

Lord Byer. Yes, I shall crush him there, where he will break—
Crumble to dust—in his pride! The match was made—
Conditions, quick as I propounded them,
Accorded! Nothing wanting but consent,
There where consent was duty! There!—upon
The very threshold of completion—there
We stop and all 's undone! She shall accept,
In lieu of one who claims a noble stock,
A mate without a name!—a spurious graft,
For a fair scion!—for a boast, a blush!
And there he sits, at hand! His grace the duke
Is in a net of his own weaving caught;
Complots with noted traitors, whose designs
We yet but guess at—to whose haunts to-night
I 'll have him dogg'd and, thence as he returns,
Arrested and committed to the Tower.
Thus shall I strike one blow, but feather-light
To one that is to come.—My instrument!
[*Looking at* WILTON.
I have borne him hard! I loathe him for the blood
I more than guess he shares with me! Too near
He neighbours with the title and estates
My brothers' timely deaths without attaint
Have handed down to me. Conjecture, busy
While yet a cast remains for chance to throw,
Conjures up visions full of claims to come,
On rights usurp'd, of which the wearer stripp'd
Is left, as beggar, bare! Not trustfully
Men, wont to scowl, look sweet; yet show the wind,
That turns foul weather all at once to fair,
The wonder 's gone. A reason will suffice.
Wilton, good morning!
Wil. "Wilton!" When before
'Twas ever Mr. Brown!
Lord Byer. Wilton—

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Wil. Again!

Lord Byer. The soundest tree is still of slowest growth:
Poplars shoot up to towers, while oaks are twigs.
So loves and friendships vary just as trees;
The quickest form'd are scarce the most robust.
I am not one who gives his heart away
Upon a fit of liking. I take time;
Time is the test of truth. 'Tis many a day
Since we knew one another—all which time
I have thought much—felt much—but little said;
And e'en that little churlishly enough—
Morosely, may be.—What, though, if I say
It went against the grain? It did so, Wilton.
I oft have chid myself for slighting thee—
Tax'd myself roundly—but my after-thought
Has ta'en my part; for who should nourish love
While chance remains of sudden withering
From some unknown, too late reveal'd, defect?
Thus have I kept aloof, but with the aim
To know the thing, I wish'd to draw more near,
That, once embracing it, the lock might last!
I know thee now, and henceforth we are friends!

Wil. My lord!—

Lord Byer. Enough! I guess what thou would'st say;
I know thy modest nature. Be assured
Thou canst instruct me there;—yet, it may be
This seeming strange transition genders doubt.

Wil. My lord!—

Lord Byer. I know you do not doubt me. Men,
Single themselves, are always large of trust.
I own I stand in need of some; but you
Can give and have to spare. You are a free,
A most deserving, more foregoing man.
Have I not seen your patience? Has it fail'd,
And has it not been tried? Ay, has it, Wilton!
Ay, to my shame, I would say, knew I not
My heart, and the fair end it had in view.
The end, at times, transforms the means, that what
We pass'd in hate, our love looks back upon!
Wilton, you ought to rise!—You have the worth;
The palm should come, and shall!

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Wil. Alas!—
Lord Byer. I say
I know your modesty—and modesty
Is that rare quality men most applaud
But nourish least, because 'tis not its art
To enrich itself. The wealthy and the high
Are the world's idols. Wilton, you must rise,
And then, have modesty, or have it not,
You will be hugg'd! You have the merit, sir,
But not the front; and, better have the front
If you would make your way. There's not a week
In the year but mere pretension plays and wins,
And merit looking on, that knows the game,
But doubts to take the cards! Do I not know,
The very debts that men contract with you,
So far from claiming, you have ever shunn'd
The sight of those who owe them!
Wil. Debts, my lord?
Lord Byer. Ay, debts!
Wil. I know of none.
Lord Byer. Indeed! Why, then,
The Duke of Gaveston and his daughter do!
Moreover, as I learn, acknowledge them;
Farther, would render payment—*One*, at least.
I know the Lady Laura loves you, Wilton.
Wil. Forbear, my lord! O speak not lightly of
A lady's love! It is her paramount
Especial jewel, over which keep guard
All things most rare in her tenacious sex;
Its radiant truth; its fragrant chastity;
Its goodness of the 'haviour of the heavens;
Its modesty—enhancement of all these—
Setting them off with veil more rare and rich
Than ever needle broider'd, or the loom!
If I were rich, my lord, as you would say,
'Twere scarce a theme for my rapt soul and me
To enter on so freely!
Lord Byer. You are worth
Her love, and have it, Wilton! Nay, she makes
No secret on't. Her father told me so;

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Founded thereon rejection of my son,
Altho' with bitterness of galled pride.
Wil. No wonder! He's a duke; and what am I?
Lord Byer. Why, Wilton, not the humble man you think!
Wil. Again! You know the secret of my birth!
[*Rushing up to* Lord Byerdale.
Who were my parents!—O the loneliness
To live and feel, unknowing whence we sprung!
To bear most gratefully a heavy debt,
Enjoining boundless reverence and love,
Without a token of the benefactors
We owe it to! My lord, you are a father,—
You have a thought of what a son must feel
In plight so blank as mine! Who were my parents?—
Tho' they were peasants, tell me! All I want
Is but to know to whom my yearning heart
Had nature's right to cleave! That they are dead
I know.—Who were they? Tell me, that I make
Out of their memories, breathing, glowing things,
To keep with me and cherish and revere!
Lord Byer. Good Wilton—
Wil. Nay, you have the knowledge.
Lord Byer. Yes.
Wil. Then tell me what you know!—you would relieve
A famish'd man—my lord, I hunger more!
Lord Byer. Be patient!—Hear me!—Now is not the time;
Content you, what I know you shall be told,
Yet learn thus far:—Your veins are fraught with streams
Were running rich ere those that fill the duke's
Were known to flow. Spare unavailing pains;
To that thou hast the power to compass, give
Your cares alone. The Lady Laura loves you;
You covet her; you shall possess her, ay,
With will of the proud duke—if not—with suit!
I tell thee, Wilton, he shall seek thee soon,
More heartily than he did ever shun thee.
Reckon on that thou hast within thy reach,

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And, as to other ventures, trust the winds!—
They 'll bring them home before you look for them.
[*Goes out.*

Wil. More light—not more content!—Better be dark
As ever.—Better not to know a part,
Than, knowing that, to have the rest withheld!
Who halts at prospect of the pinnacle
That gives him note his journey's end is nigh,
Except with fever of inquietude?
Way-gone and crippled, rather would he on
Than lay him down and rest another night.
But I must rest, it seems, howe'er I can!
The knowledge of my birth brings knowledge else
They would withhold! Who has good news to tell
And does not tell it out?—Nay, if he stops,
It is for something that undoes the whole!
Conjecture 's waste, that ends where it began!
Yet must I on again, nor better speed!
The duke consent to mate his child with me?
How?—When?—A reason?—'Tis deception all!
He plays a part! Said not Lord Sherbrooke now
His heart was fraught with malice 'gainst the duke,
And means he the duke well?—He loves not me
And does he mean me well? Tell me, the duke
Will sue to me to wed his noble child!
Oh, I would wed her!—but will wed her never,
Except with free and full consent of honour!
[*Goes out.*

SCENE II.—*A Room in the Green Dragon.* Sir George Barkley, Sir Richard Fenwick, Sir William Parkyn, Sir John Friend, Harrison, Charnock, *and others, seated round a table, whereon there are papers and other implements for writing. They rise and come forward.*

Sir G. Bark. Sirs, 'tis the journey's end, without the toil,
The chance, a thousand things that stop the way
On a long road, and cause the traveller

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To curse the setting out—for what 's the strife ?
Why, James, or William of Nassau !—Away
With one of them—'tis done !
Sir R. Fen. It was the counsel
I cleaved to all along.
Sir W. Park. And I.
The others [*except* ARMSTRONG]. And all.
Sir G. Bark. Which, had it been allowed to take its course,
Our hopes had been consummate now, instead
Of things to question. 'Sdeath, sirs ! men resolved
To act, should on like men, and act at once,
Nor stop and gape about them !
Arm. Colonel Green—
Sir G. Bark. Who 's that? I trust all here are friends!
Arm. 'Twas I
That spoke !
Sir G. Bark. And what of Colonel Green ?
Arm. The plan
Was liked by all but him—I meant to say
No more.
Sir G. Bark. The plan was liked by all but him !
Who broke it to him ? 'Tis for him to act,
Not plot. He does not like the covert blow !
No more do I—no more does any man.
But if one blow will save a million, strike,
And never hang debating on the mode.
The Colonel has seen service—
Arm. You say right.
He 's an old soldier and a gallant one !
Sir G. Bark. Who does not know it ?—Will you let me speak,
And bide your time—or, must you speak, speak on,
But tell us something new ! He is a soldier,
And, would he mutter at an ambuscade ?
Or, never has he plann'd nor captain'd one ?
I warrant you !—'Twere news indeed to him
To tell him war is free to stratagems ;
And says he it is peace ? Why are we here,
And others sitting in our easy chairs ?
Are not our own doors, sirs, the very last

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We dare to knock at? Are we the king's men,
And sits another on our master's throne?
The fight is over! Is it?—Ay!—indeed,
While in their sheaths our rapiers restless lie!
Before a month an army 's in the field,
And is it peace?

Sir R. Fen. You are warm!

Sir G. Bark. I own I am.

Sir J. Friend. We are all agreed.

Sir G. Bark. But others should be here.
Where is the Duke of Gaveston?

Sir R. Fen. Have you broached
The purport of our meeting to his grace?

Sir G. Bark. No; for his grace is like a restive horse,
Given to back at starting—free enough,
If once he 's made to go. Lead him by the head
A little, and he 'll progress.

Sir W. Park. Hark! a step!

Sir G. Bark. See who it is!—Who is it?

Sir W. Park. 'Tis the duke.

Enter the DUKE OF GAVESTON.

Sir G. Bark. Your grace is welcome, though the hour rebukes
Your punctuality.

Duke of Gav. Nay, Sir George Barkley,
The most assured purpose must resign
The mastery to chance! My coach broke down.

Sir W. Park. His grace is full in time.

Sir G. Bark. I do not mean
To blame his grace—but a conspirator
Is one who sails in treacherous latitudes,
Where tempests give no warning, but blow up
The waves at once; where, while you look at him,
The sun goes out, and all the heaven is wrack;
And thunders bellow the next minute only,
To that when scarce the ripple at the bow
Whisper'd the vessel's course. So I mistrust,
Yet cause see none to fear. Possess the duke
Of what we have debated and resolved.

[*The* DUKE *retires with* SIR W. PARKYN.

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Sir J. Friend. [*aside to* SIR G. BARKLEY]. His grace is potent; what if he demur?

Sir G. Bark. [*aside to* SIR J. FRIEND]. He will demur!—observe his grace's looks!

He likes not foreign aid!—that frets the grain.
He will not sail with us if he can help;
But he 's aboard and we command the ship!
'Tis but "Up anchor," and we scud along!
The cloud again, but darker!

Duke of Gav. [*coming forward*]. Never, sirs!
'Gainst foreign aid I enter, come what may,
My protest. If we cannot right ourselves,
We 'll bear our wrongs, and let our brothers have
The day, howe'er unjustly, rather than
Commit ourselves and them into the hands
Of the natural enemy!—and as for him
Who has usurp'd the throne, as we aver,
Why, let him keep it, if to strike him thence
Needs the assassin's arm. The noblest cause
Were damn'd to seek success by means so foul!
The field, sirs, if you will!—I am with you there;
But not in a conspiracy like this,
Befitting men who make a trade of blood—
Abhorr'd of those who hire them!

Sir G. Bark. You are quick
In making up your mind to draw your stakes!
You are in the game, and must abide the deal.

Duke of Gav. Must, sir!

Sir G. Bark. Plain speech fits best in grave affairs!
Sirs, we are like to mariners escaped
A founder'd ship, in open boat at sea;
The will of the majority is law,
He who demurs to which goes overboard!
Here are our measures stated; whereunto
Want but our signatures as evidence
For one and all, that all committed stand!
Come; while this solemn act proceeds, unsheath.

[*They draw.*

His grace, in point of right, precedence takes.

Duke of Gav. I will not sign, sirs, neither draw my sword.

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Sir G. Bark. [*grasping the* DUKE'S *wrist*]. Nay,
my lord duke, you must.
Col. Green. [*entering*]. Good even, sirs!
A wonted guest may come unbidden.
Sir G. Bark. Green!
Who let you in?
Col. Green. Who durst not keep me out.
And if he could, what is the use of doors
When councils are not close?—You talk too much,
Good Sir George Barkley! Since I thwarted you
A month ago in these same measures, which,
To carry through, you now convene your friends,
You have boasted fifty times, by this and that,
To divers hearers, and in divers haunts,
You 'd bring your plans to bear, in which, I grieve,
Others that should know better, side with you.
But not with you my business.
Sir G. Bark. Whom besides?
Col. Green. The Duke of Gaveston. But that he
were here,
I had not come. He is refractory;
I said he would be so, and I am glad;
For prophets like to see their words come true.
Good Sir George Barkley!—
Sir G. Bark. Sir?
Col. Green. You make too free
With his grace's sleeve! So please you, let it go.
Sir G. Bark. Who abets treachery?
Sir J. Friend and others. None here!
Col. Green. Well said,
Assassination! Well said, the allies
Of the common enemy!—the gentlemen
Who plan when William next should hunt the stag—
A masquerade, wherein the foreign bravo
Should don the British sportsman's jovial gear,
Who gives the game a chance!—who undertake
To give kind welcome to a force from France—
Suffer her skipping sons to flourish here
Weapons that never left their scabbards yet,
Except with threat against a British throat!
Who abets treachery? So! Sir George Barkley,

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I say, once more, let go his grace's sleeve!
I wish a word with him.
Sir G. Bark. Is't not enough
We are gainsaid?—shall we be bearded too—
Our weapons in our hands?
Col. Green. Beware, the first
Who stirs to strike. Tho' many look one way,
All are not of one mind. Good Sir George Barkley,
You should know better! Men, in counting friends,
May chance to overlook a foe or two.
Before you call a game of swords, behoves
You make sure of the sides. Moreover, sir,
The wisest man counts most upon himself,
As I, you see, have done!
[*Throws back his cloak and shows himself provided with pistols, &c.*
Beware, Sir George,
For pistols make reports!—reports are heard!
Triggers are quick! and, if the priming burns,
Why then, in an old hand, is powder dust!
I have a sword besides, that's used to odds,
As more than one can vouch! Come, Sir George Barkley,
Let go the duke this minute, or the next
A bullet's through your head!—You know I mark
Whenever I take aim!
[Sir GEORGE BARKLEY *releases the* DUKE.
That's courteous, sir!
Your grace will please to leave my frontage clear,
And step a pace behind me. Now, Sir George,
A minute's parley if you will.
Char. We treat
You fairly; wherefore do you thwart us thus?
Col. Green. You treat me fairly! Hear you, Sir George Barkley—
I speak to you, sir, you! the head of those
Who treat me fairly! Sir, you hatch'd this plot
Without my privity! Was that fair? It
Was wise—I should have crush'd it in the hatching!
You warn'd me hold myself in readiness,
With ten of those who follow me, to back you

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In the enterprise, but never once let out
The nature on't,—Was that fair? It was prudent:
The breath you breathed it in had been your last one!
A friend—I have some—put me on my guard.
I was to learn hereafter! when I stood
Unwittingly committed in the fact!
And yet he tells me I am treated fairly!
And had it come to pass, sure as you hear me,
Straight to the block had I given up myself,
And dragg'd you thither with me, one and all!
Sir G. Bark. Design you to betray us?
Col. Green. No; that's truth;
But I'll defeat your plans!—That's truth again!
Your names I ne'er divulge! Your heads are safe,
For any hint that I shall give the axe!
Arm. He is a man of honour—fear him not.
Sir G. Bark. But I do fear him.
Col. Green. Do, and reap the fruit!
A craven spirit scared without a cause!
Sir G. Bark. We should not let him go.
Col. Green. Nay, but you should.
Sir G. Bark. Wherefore?
Col. Green. Because you must. Good even, friends!
Be what you were when I made one among you,—
Soldiers!—I hold not compact with assassins!
Trust to yourselves!—Make not allies of foes!
For him who owns the throne another fills,
Array the honourable, open field,
Then call me traitor if I show not there!
Pray move not from your places—We can find
The stairs without your help—which trust me, sirs,
Were pains that scarcely would repay themselves;
And so I take my leave.—A kind good night!

[*The* DUKE *and* Colonel GREEN *go out. The others draw into a knot in the back of the stage.*

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ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Kensington Palace.*

Enter COLONEL GREEN *and a* PAGE.

Col. Green. My business will not stay, sir! 'Tis direct
And urgent. It is done this very hour,
Or not at all. Your own discretion use;
But using it, remove all blame from me.
The council sits; and, as you say, no doubt
On grave affairs; but graver bring me hither.
So tell Lord Portland.

Page. May I crave your name?

Col. Green. No, sir; my business is my name; and that
I tell to none but him.

Page. He scarce will grant
An audience to an unknown visitor.

Col. Green. And, if I give my name, I am unknown.
What then, sir? Do you know me? No. To you
Or him, I give what name I please; but, save
My own, I shall give none, and that, so please you,
I will not give. My business is of moment!—
Instant in matter vital to the king:
That for your warrant to perform my wish.
Yet something farther. Tell his lordship, one
Whose life he saved, craves speech with him. The Boyne
Will help his memory as to time and place.
An officer dismounted in the rout,
Who would not ask his life from swords, enow
To give discomfort to a wavering troop:—
His lordship saw my plight—call'd off the dogs,
And saved the game, at bay! He'll recollect,
Else is his memory shorter, sir, than mine;

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For I shall ne'er forget it till I die!
Now may I trust you'll pleasure me?

Page. I shall. [*Goes out.*

Col. Green. No man is bound when evil counsels warp
Those he contracted with on honest grounds.
There's the default of combinations. Men
Respect the compact more than they love truth.
Keep it together when 'tis crack'd and flaw'd
With rank defect, thro' folly creeping in,
Cunning or crime, and ought to fall to pieces!
Brand me a traitor!—say I am foresworn!—
If I must hold with men, or lose the grasp
Of mine own soul! Away the allegation
That flouts the laws of man—mocks those of Heaven!
My honour's dear content is cheaply kept
At loss of the whole world!—Conscience is all!
But let me not forget the leaguer'd duke,
Now in the toils of some close enemy—
Belike the Earl of Byerdale.—Revenge
For the rejection of the son! 'Twas strange
They captured him, yet laid not hand on me.
Herein his case I have in full set forth,
And pleaded as his bearing warranted,
For Wilton's sake. No friend of mine is he!

Enter the PAGE *conducting in the* KING.

Page. This is the person.

King. So!—You may withdraw. [PAGE *retires.*
I recollect him; tho' twelve years might serve
A longer memory for plea to lose
A trace of one beheld but once, and then
In wrack of tempest. Yes; it is the man!
Tho' by his air, more than his person known.
He knows not me. Report, that gatherer
Of all that comes to hand—which oft picks up
Falsehood as truth—has pass'd another for me.
Your business, Sir?

Col. Green. See I at last the man
To whom I owe my life?

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King. You see that man.

Col. Green. And, if I do, first let me say to him
My debt, altho' long due, was ne'er forgot;
And, tho' to pay it I am bankrupt, save
In gratitude, yet that has known no waste
From lapse of time; but still has grown and grown,
Till now my heart, half bursting with its fraught,
Has scarce the power to lay it down before him!

King [*aside*]. A man of generous nature well as brave!
I did myself befriend, befriending you!
I recollect you; tho' the veil which years
Casts o'er the face they have had time to weave.
I recollect you, Sir! A gallant man
Is scarce forgotten by his brother, tho'
At odds with him—especially when seen
In strait that proves him mettle to the core!
Such as beleaguer'd you. I am very glad
You 'scaped the further hazard of the day,
And live in health to this.

Col. Green. O, my good lord—

King. Your business, pray you?

Col. Green. If I speak of one,
You serve and reverence, by a title, less
Than that you name him with, forgive a man
Who having been the subject of a king
Who had a throne, pays him allegiance now
Without one.

King. Sir, I understand you. Spare
Excuses! Save compunction! We shall speak
Of William of Nassau. What you would say
Refers to him?

Col. Green. His safety!

King. Ay!

Col. Green. His life!

King. His life is in High Hands, Sir, and to those
He trusts it!

Col. Green. Those who do not fear such hands
Are arm'd against his life.

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King. Sir, every day
Is rife with rumours—every day we hear
Of plots a-hatching, ready to start up;
Yet day succeeds to day and nothing stirs
To cost a wink of sleep! The King's at ease—
That is—I should say—William of Nassau!
Col. Green. Your lordship will compel me say "the King,"
If for my feelings thus you tax your own;
And, yet, I should not say it.
King. Nothing say
But what you should say. What 's the danger, sir,
You hint at?
Col. Green. What I know on better ground
Than simple rumour! What with my own eyes
I have seen—have heard with mine own ears—had been
A party to, but that, at the first blush,
My soul revolted at the treason!
King. Treason
To William of Nassau!
Col. Green. To mine own honour!
King. I thought, sir, 'twas the life of such a man
I saved! Go on!
Col. Green. Ere I proceed, I have
A boon to ask—nay, a condition.
King. Well!
Say a condition, 'tis accorded!—Name it.
Col. Green. Not to be importuned—far less required—
To divulge a single name! for they are mates
I hitherto made common cause with—brothers
In honourable venture—bonded with me
By wear of sinew and by waste of blood.
If I defeat the guilt, it is enough;
I 'll not betray the guilty, come what may!
King. It is enough!
Col. Green. But further yet, my lord;
If aught transpire to bring to perfect light
The plot with its contrivers, I shall stand
Aloof!—No evidence of mine be call'd

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To fix the penalty on the accused—
And, tho' it were, I should be mute, and keep
My silence steadfast to the very block.
King. I think you would!—Have all that you demand—
My honour is impledged! And now, the peril?
Col. Green. Assassination!
King. That is a base pass
For your king's cause to come to!
Col. Green. On my soul
He knows it not! Did he, upon the same
Immortal, irrecoverable pledge,
If forfeited—he would denounce it, though
It cost frustration of his regal hopes!
King. [*after a pause.*] You are a loyal man!—
What farther, sir,
Concerning William of Nassau? Unless
You throw some farther light, he 's struck before
He sees the blow.
Col. Green. To-morrow he will dine
With my Lord Romney—
King. Ay?—Behoves our William
He whisper his engagements with his friends!
Well?
Col. Green. He will be beset with twice the sum
Of his accustom'd guards.
King. That 's matter, sir:
Proceed.
Col. Green. On Saturday, towards ten at night,
He is like to pass 'cross Turnham Green.
King. Indeed!
A worse than bootless journey saved perhaps,
Or taken at more charge of retinue!
Aught else?
Col. Green. If they are baffled there, he hunts;
And, on some breathing day, they will take care
To turn out such a field that Death himself
Shall ride along with him.

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King. They go to work
In earnest!
Col. Green. O, my lord! Protect your king!
Counsel him to be wary! Hedge him round
With safety thickly!—thickly, my good lord!
For your own sake—for your fair country's sake,
That loathes the secret stab—Nay for his own!
For he is brave—a thousand miles above
A foul and dastard death!—an upright prince!
As all allow—even his enemies!
Grateful to those who serve him—meaning well,
Even in the act which I and many more
Traverse and bear with blame—Altho' to him
I ne'er owe fealty, nor bend the knee,
Nor—
King. Stop!—you are in error all along;
Which, with your leave, I now will set to rights.
'Tis not the lord of Portland talks with you;
'Twas not the lord of Portland saved your life;
His squadrons William of Nassau awhile
In person led. He saw you, thick beset;
He heard the death or quarter proffer'd you;
The latter, point at throat, you would not ask!—
The first, were ready—like a cavalier
Whose soul was in the cause he battled for
And saw was lost—to take! He stopp'd the thrust;
Saw you remount, and order'd you free way!
You say it was a debt—well; be it so!
But, if it was, 'tis amply now repaid;
And take acquittance full, and thanks, to boot,
From William of Nassau!
Col. Green. The king!—My life
Your highness' gift!—Then 'tis your highness' due,
And on my knee, I tender it!
King. Indeed!—
I did not look for this.
Col. Green. I know it, sire!
And, therefore, tender 't the more heartily.
King. Rise, pray you!

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Teach me how I am to name you.
You hesitate!—Enough!—Take your own time
And opportunity. I shall expect
To hear from you.—Nay, since you give me right,
I do command that you apprise me fully
Touching the knowledge which I now forego!
And now, good morning, sir. If I have found
A subject, well!—if not—you have found a friend!

Col. Green. A king! my liege.

King. Then, sir, the better friend!

Col. Green. O, yet vouchsafe, my liege, another moment:
One who his life imperil'd yesternight,
Discountenancing foulest treachery,
Was in my presence by your messenger
Arrested, and, as truly I believe,
Not upon public but base private grounds—
The Duke of Gaveston.

King. Ay!—I know the duke
Affects another's cause; but, by my crown,
I hold him as an open enemy,
And bear no grudge to him.—Concerns that scroll
The duke?

Col. Green. [*presenting the scroll*]. It does.

King. I shall peruse it, sir,
And when I know the man who gave it me—
As I do hold you bound to let me know him—
Declare my judgment on it.

Col. Green. Yet, my liege,
Another moment.—Deem me not a man
Who loosely cleaves! Had I been such a one,
I had been shaken off by slights, neglects,
Short-comings, and offences, long ago!
Nay, farther,—think not 'tis my personal
Peculiar debt alone determines me
I' the transfer of my duty; for of late,
I have begun to see, despite my wish,
Another good, neglected formerly,
Incorporated with the regal weal

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In your more equal, patriotic sway.
I say 't with pain of heart, yet hearty faith,
And, to assert it, henceforth draw my breath.

[*They go out severally.*

SCENE II.—Lord Byerdale's *Library*. Wilton *discovered sitting. He comes forward.*

Wil. Hope! ready promiser, unsure performer,
Unequal architect, that builds the mole,
Which breaks the mountain billows into spray;
Or fabrics fragile, as the gossamers'
That come and vanish with the dews of morn;
Bitter betrayer, yet sweet counsellor,
Voucher believed, with thousand broken oaths!
Friend false, yet, for a fair face, trusted still—
Why do I listen to thee? Joyful dream,
That turns out oft, on waking, blank despair,
Why do I trust thy visions, and dream on,
Grasping the good I never may enjoy?
Yet art thou blest so far—The naked wretch
Goes clad by thee, the while—the hungry feasts!
The wo-begone forget their tears and smile!
The better part of being is fill'd up
With solace by thee, and the load, that else
Would break the back, is borne with patience still!
Thou art the anodyne which lulls the pang,
That should not chide thee, tho' it wakes again!
The stimulant which breaks the lethargy,
Which, tho' it close on us again, thou robb'st
Of so much being, else were swallow'd up!
Thou art a good, altho' a doubtful one,
And, wanting thee, this fitful course of life
Were never half run thro'! I'll deal with thee!
But, yet, with question; so, by thy default
I suffer less, and, if thou keep'st thy word,
Lose nothing of the gain thou promisest!

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Enter WILLIAMS.

Will. A lady, sir, would speak with you.

Wil. A lady?—
With me?—Conduct her in. [WILLIAMS *goes out.*
What sympathy
Lives 'twixt my heart and her's that comes, that thus
I am all alarms?

[WILLIAMS *re-enters, conducting in* Lady LAURA *veiled.*
Withdraw.

[WILLIAMS *goes out.* WILTON *offers a chair, which is declined.*
Will you not sit? [*She declines again.*
Madam, your will?

Lady Lau. The fullest credit, sir.
A gentlewoman in unwonted strait,
Compelling her to slight allowed forms,
May challenge at a man of honour's hands.

Wil. The voice is hers—her lineaments and form
The air betrays, which none could mock so well,
As to deceive the eye, instructed once
How symmetry and beauty bear themselves
United in one costly paragon!

Lady Lau. A tardy answer speaks a doubtful suit;
The boon we wish to grant is graced at once!
I blush enough, believe me, at my boldness,
To need to blush at your rebuff as well.

Wil. [*Rushing up to her and taking her hand.*] It must be you!

Lady Lau. [*Throwing back her veil.*] Wilton, 'tis I!—
[WILTON *offers to kneel.*] Forbear.
Nay, keep your feet. Knee give me none, save that
Obedience bends! I know not reverence
Of shows and words!—I challenge none at all!
Why should I?—I, that poorly have upheld
My maiden state! or am I all-forgot?
And did you woo me long?—protest your love
A thousand times ere I would lend an ear?
Sue me with sighs as thick as winter gusts,

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To win a breath of faint encouragement?
Besiege each access to my chary love,
My pity, pride, trust, generosity,
Till heart of stone could not withstand the dint
Of such enforcement, and, to yield, became
A grace in most unquestion'd modesty?
Didst thou all these, or any one of these?
Or—was I cheaper than a peasant won,
That's found not, save by seeking?

Wil. Lady—

Lady Lau. Lady!
Ay; I have borne myself most loftily!
Maintain'd my sex's rights with most high hand!
I thought I had!—If I had met you, Wilton,
In a gay ball, I should have pass'd you by
With eye withdrawn soon as it lit on you;
For face and form of man I ne'er perused,
So was I wont to pore upon the spirit
That makes the high romantic in your sex;
But when I mark'd your visage kindling up
With all that prompts what chivalry enacts,
As, single to my foes you stood opposed—
A bastion 'twixt aggression and the weak—
Comely and stately! garrison'd by proof
Of valour, truth, and generosity,
The vision, which, from girlhood e'en till then,
My soul had raised, embodied stood before me,
And all my woman's nature clung to thee!

Wil. What mean your words? Something is wrong!
What is it?

Lady Lau. All 's wrong!—A maid should be an icicle,
Yielding but drop by drop—and then with chilling
Cold to the last! Melting, not of herself,
But 'gainst her nature!—then she 's worth the thawing!
Frankness in her is not a virtue, or
'Tis one that will undo her! She should go
Without a heart!—It is her poverty
To have one! Men aver they prize her for 't;

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But when they find she has one, and 'tis theirs,
They care for't, as for that they cast away!
Wil. And if your heart is mine, my dearest hopes
Were with it cast away.
Lady Lau. Your dearest hopes!
They are no longer hopes!—You are sure of them!
Wil. Madam!
Lady Lau. Ay, Madam!
My Lady Laura Gaveston!—the duke's daughter!
Tell me the truth! Have I not play'd my part
Most poorly? With most abject, paltry spirit?
Heaven! but a maid 's in an extremity
That tells her love! But do me justice, sir;
Or hear me justify myself! I saw you
Of humble rank, but thought your nature noble
Beyond enhancing by a thousand patents!
I saw that you affected me—you did so.
But that, what the mere name of rank had loosed
The essence tied—your tongue.—I spoke, because
You could not speak—spoke for myself, I own,
But for myself, because I spoke for you;
Else, never!—I had wither'd to a shroud,
And all had wonder'd how! With but my heart
You might have staid content, as I with yours,
My hand, have left to chance! It was not fair
To win it in a strait, without advice
Or hint! No will of mine consulted!—"Yea,"
Or "Nay," a cypher!—no more option than
A bargain bought and sold! Yours will I be,
But how? With all my heart? No, Wilton!—Go
Not back for what I speak!—I will be thine!—
It must be, but alas! how fall'n in pride!
How shamed beyond endurement! how betray'd!
How jarr'd in love—for I do love you still!
How broken in content at prospering!—
How balk'd in all made hope of union sweet!
Wil. How comes this ruin where I nothing see
That 's flaw'd, far less gives way?—O lady!—

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Lady Lau. Peace!
Enough! To-night we wed.
Wil. We wed to-night!
Lady Lau. Whence all this wonder where there's nothing new?
Wil. All's new to me! All strange that you aver,—
The last most strange of all!
Lady Lau. And know you naught
Touching the earl?
Wil. [*recollecting himself*]. The earl!
Lady Lau. You recollect!—
Your wander'd thoughts come home!
Wil. I see it all!
Something has been transacted which you think
I have lent aidance to,—with which my wish,
You think, has gone along, or my consent!
I am clear as your unquestionable self
In each of these respects! The earl—
Lady Lau. Go on!—
There is the shoal that wrecks me, or, escaped,
Sees me at anchor with a freight to scorn
An Argosie?—Go on!—
Wil. What you aver
Shall come to pass, he told me should arrive.
Lady Lau. But not the means?—Wilton, if yet I doubt,
It is with yearning for the clearing up,
That brightness may be perfect—not a wreath
To flit across the welkin of my hopes,—
But sun! all sun!—But not the means?
Wil. No!
Lady Lau. No?
I am thy wife to-night!—At ten to-night
I plight thee troth for troth!
Wil. Where?
Lady Lau. Bless thee for
That question!
Wil. Where?

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Lady Lau. Again? Nor once too oft—
O my tenacious soul, not pleased enough
With proof on proof, but grasps at more and more.
Where?—Guess!
Wil. Thy father's house?
Lady Lau. My father's jail!
Wil. His jail!
Lady Lau. The Tower! Nay, do not gasp; and yet
Didst thou not, Wilton, I should stint for breath,
I should not heed, tho' ne'er again I drew!
Forgive me! Clear thou nothing know'st! Forgive me! [*Kneels to* WILTON.
Wil. Rise!
Lady Lau. To thy arms I will—my pardon seal'd!
Wil. [*raising her*]. O, hope outdone—reality undream'd.
Lady Lau. Listen, lest opportunity be gone.
My father on a charge of treason bides
A pris'ner in the Tower. These are times
When not men's reasons, but their passions, fill
The judgment-seat; wherefore, it oft goes hard
With innocence itself. The axe alone
Is sure of its rights, and those, and more, it gets;
And takes them sudden quick!—Ah, Wilton!—Well!—
This knows my father—this the earl has urged;
Has plann'd evasion of, and will afford;
Upon condition that the hour which sets
My father free, shall see his child in bonds
She 'll wear with all her heart—put on by thee!
Forbear! I know thy thoughts!—Speak not!—Hear mine!
It must be!—More a maiden should not say!
Yet wherefore?—Love that 's not ingenuous
Does not deserve and should abjure the name!
Whate'er the motives of the subtle earl,
Let it be, Wilton, for my father's sake!
If not for his sake, let it be for thine!
If that lacks cogency, for my sake, then! [*Knocking.*
Listen—a summons at the portal!—Wilton,

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Pay me no tendance as I leave the house;
Let me go forth as I were nobody!
Thou'lt do my bidding?

Wil. Yes.

Lady Lau. Thy word's my soul!
At ten to-night, thou wedd'st me in the Tower!
[*Goes out.*

Wil. With faculties more lapsed, ne'er vision left
The rapt beholder—vanishing, while yet
His soul was on the strain, where tension stops,
Or snaps! Belief at once recoils, and trusts;
Questions the senses, with their evidence
Distinct and strong as e'er defied disproof!
Asks "Is it so?" and answer'd, to content
Of reason, starts a doubt, and asks again,
Without a ground save its own strange amaze!
Give loose to joy, and welcome Fortune, though
Her visit is unlook'd for, and she comes
With face all bright, where scarce you hoped a smile!
The earl?—Why how is this?—Why breaks he up
The goodly company of my fair thoughts,
That fly at his approach!

Lord Byer. [*entering*]. Wilton, good news!
I would have been the harbinger, but find
A friend has been beforehand with me—still
I say "Good news!" and give thee hearty joy!
The Lady Laura weds thee, boy, to-night;
And hence you bear her! Said I not, good Wilton,
It should be so? And that it is so, take
The warrant of the duke.— [*Gives a paper.*
You have his child's;
I met her as I enter'd. Sooth, she well
Affects thee!—a fair bride, and free as fair!
See how her father makes thee full amends
For all the slight he show'd thee.

Wil. [*reading.*] From the Tower?

Lord Byer. Ay, Wilton. He would meddle—take a part—
In the game arch-traitors' play—The cards were struck

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From his hands, tho' scarce in time to save the stake,
His life—which he must owe to thee.—You read?

Wil. I do, my lord.

Lord Byer. He speaks his wishes plainly?

Wil. He does.

Lord Byer. And urgently?

Wil. And urgently.

Lord Byer. I said it should be so.

Wil. You did—but—

Lord Byer. But!—

Do you demur? Well?—what?—Is the duke to die?

Wil. I would but ask—

Lord Byer. You would but ask—

Wil. My lord!—

Lord Byer. Ask nothing when your wish is at the door;

But welcome it, lest, once you shut it out,
It never come again! I have done my best,
And brook not questioning. Are you content,
Or are you not? If not, no harm is done
To you; and, for the duke, he must abide
The issue whereto you abandon him!
Speaks the duke plainly?

Wil. Yes.

Lord Byer. The lady said
That you stood bound to her to do his will.
Good sooth, it cost no effort, I should think!
Why start a hindrance now?

Wil. I started none:
I only—

Lord Byer. Only is too much—offence
My honour will not brook. You doubt the means—
I know you do.—Doubt on, and lose the end!
The actor vouches for the act, and scorns
Interpretations—which come gracelessly
From those he means to serve! I am content;
Let that suffice!—If not, why let it pass!
And on good fortune turn the thankless back.

Wil. I am not unthankful.

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Lord Byer. No? Then close at once;
And, without more ado, with what's proposed:
Do you?
Wil. I do.
Lord Byer. Your honour to't!
Wil. 'Tis given.
Lord Byer. Take, in exchange, the bridegroom's joy to-night,
Who at the altar clasps the maid he loves
In that embrace which fathers can't unlock.
I'll write a word or two. [*Sits and writes.*
Wil. I feel as one
Who walks 'midst quicksands, and at every step
Fears to be swallow'd up. My heart misgives—
Tells me some gulf's at hand—yet must I on!
Lord Byer. This gives you entrance to the Tower, and this
Egress with whom you will. I'll wait you here.
Ten is the hour. The chaplain of the fortress
Has been bespoken, and will tie the knot
Quickly and fast. Prepare you for love's voyage;
Hence shall you hie to ship! Fair winds attend you!—
Wil. O, yet a word, my lord—No doubt—a boon,
Touching myself alone! You said my blood
Was richly noble—tell me who I am!
Lord Byer. [*after a pause.*] I will, upon condition of an oath.
Wil. Propound it.
Lord Byer. That what I divulge, you'll keep
Strict from your mistress and the duke, until
His prison walls are pass'd. It alters naught
Which ought to stand.—Thou art of noble blood—
Wil. Am I?—I give my oath.
Lord Byer. [*aside*]. I nothing risk!
It is a triumph which invites me now,
And longer to delay were misery.
Wil. O speak, my lord!
Lord Byer. I see you burn to know.
Wilton, we share one blood.

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Wil. My gracious lord!
Lord Byer. I am your uncle!—
Wil. If my duty—
Lord Byer. Nay;
I claim no duty from you! You are e'en
My eldest brother's son.
Wil. His son, my lord!
Lord Byer. But not his heir.—There was a bar to that!
Wil. A bar! A bar?
Lord Byer. Your mother bless'd his bed;
But not that bed, the priest—She loved and fell!
Wilton, I have kept my word!—Keep thou thy oath!
[*Goes out.*
Wil. Monster!—O, double malice! Hate 'gainst me!
Revenge against the duke!—both in the clutch
Of his most devilish craft! The duke with life
In jeopardy—which but these nuptials save!
The terms of liberty, which, till he gains,
My lips are seal'd! No option left him, thus,
Betwixt disgrace and death! With branded brow
Espouse his trusting honourable child!
Swear in the very act of such betrayal,
To love and cherish her! Myself a monster,
Save I incur the blight of perjury!
Dilemma hideous and inextricable!
Guidance! Help! Succour! Where shall they be found?
[*Goes out.*

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ACT. V.

SCENE I.—*The Street.*

Enter WILTON BROWN, *and* LORD SHERBROOKE.

Wil. Counsel me, Sherbrooke! I am past advice
Or aidance from myself! A man in bonds—
Imprison'd—one whose substance goes to rack
On a nefarious plea, which but his face
Would quash, and he 's restrain'd from showing it!
Sher. Collect your thoughts! Be more yourself!
Wil. I cannot!
To Lady Laura stand I pledged, to-night
To change my troth with hers before the priest;
Thy father's bondsman am I, further yet,
Until that league of love I implement;
And further still, the duke's life hostage held,
Which, if I know him, he would forfeit sooner
Than suffer a polluted stream to mix
With the pure current of his costly blood;
Yet there debarr'd of option, by my oath
To keep my secret till his liberty
Is by his own undoing perfected.
What 's to be done?
Sher. What is a man to do
That 's in the grasp of stronger men than he,
But go along with them? Scruples that can't
Avail should never chafe! What I should do,
And could, I would do; but, the power away,
The crime of the omission is away!
Our parentage is not of our own choice,
So its discredit to its framers stick,
Not us; and hang the world that makes it ours!
Sooth, though the banns had never been proclaim'd,
I had been still the goodly youth I am;

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The same engaging features—shapely form—
Right gallant carriage—girth and height without
Abatement of the matter of an inch!
The same bold, merry heart, and pranksome wit;
I do believe my blood had been the same,
The same my hair and skin! Tut, Wilton! men
Should answer for themselves, and live and breathe
In others' 'count, by their own deeds alone!

Wil. A friend that knew my wishes and my strait,
Might, of his own accord, effect for me
What mocks my faculty!

Sher. And if he did,
How might you thank him by and bye? No, sir;
I live in hopes to be a god-father,
And can't forego the chance. I would enjoy,
Moreover, the bride's customary bounty—
The blushing kiss, I, else, may never get:
Besides, I wish the race to multiply!
It is a matter that concerns the state,
And I, a loyal subject, should not thwart.
Then I have thoughts, myself, of matrimony,
Although an indefineable mistrust,
And so would profit, like a thorough friend,
By your experiment. 'Sdeath! would you spoil
The chance of such a Benedick as I?

Wil. Sherbrooke, you jest; and honour is in question!

Sher. And if it were, Wilton, I should not jest,
But set you free at thraldom of my life.
Look you; you blush to share my blood! Go to!
I would the share were double what it is!
I would you were my brother! Were you, and
With like discrepancy, my thrice-bound love,
Being the man of merit that you are,
Had more than even made the faultless odds!

Wil. The friend that soothes me tells me what I am.
Plain as the enemy that bears me hard!
I wear a branded name.

Sher. No name's a brand
When Virtue is the wearer!

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Wilt. I must seek
A sterner counsellor!
Sher. Then come with me
To Colonel Green. No question! If there lives
The man to help you, he is e'en that man.
More could I tell you—what shall soon be known.
Give me my way in this, then take your own!

SCENE II.—*A Room in the Green Dragon.*—COLONEL GREEN *discovered with papers.*

Col. Green. Why, this is granting favours like a king!
My case was all I stated; and the suit
I might, with doubt, have founded thereupon,
His clemency has of itself inferr'd,
And to his bounty pleaded royally!
One deed of grace has swept all acts away—
All penalties; and, in their place, supplied
Freedom and honour; nor to me alone,
But those I cherish closer than myself.
One only boon I ask'd—that granted too;
Enlargement of the duke, assoil'd by me.
Thus, Wilton, from the net wherein the earl
Thinks he has mesh'd him, is, at once, set free!
Why comes he not? Sherbrooke would see him straight—
That goodly sample of the choice and few
Who love so heartily another's weal,
In following it, they overlook their own.
Steps! it is he. [*Enter* WILTON]. I have expected you.
Wil. So was I told; and I am here.
Col. Green. At last.
I gave you invitation long before,
Which, in the way of common courtesy,
You might have honour'd; gave you hint, beside,
Of knowledge which concern'd you—which, to gain,
A visit might suffice.

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Wil. I know too much!
Col. Green. Not so. You must know more.
Wil. Time flies!
Col. Green. It does!
But trust and fortune match its utmost speed!
Wil. The first I have, the second have to find.
Col. Green. It may be nearer than you count.
Wil. How, sir?
Col. Green. It may be close at hand. Heaven will send help
When man believes to look for it is vain.
You trust in Heaven?
Wil. I have no other trust!
Col. Green. [*Giving a paper*]. There!
Wil. How!—The liberation of the duke!
Can I believe it?
Col. Green. Can you doubt it? Fresh!—
And from the king's own hand.
Wil. God save the king!
Col. Green. Now, have you leisure for a word or two?
Wil. Twenty, if spoken quickly—for my soul
Is on the wing to thwart iniquity,
And do a righteous deed.
Col. Green. The instrument
That paper?—How will you employ it?
Wil. Set
The duke at liberty; and, then, the spot
That blurs me laying open to the day,
Release him from his promise to the earl,
Forego his daughter's hand, and, as I may,
Buffet the world with shamed, but manly front!
Col. Green. Fathers, young man, are hardly in their graves
When, from their children thus, their spirits breathe!
Wil. Knew you my father?
Col. Green. Yes; of him I 'd speak—
Not much—of one he loved, a little more.
I chanc'd to be the nearest friend of both—
I mean, the heart-friend. Have you patience?

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Wil. Ask
When you observe me fail!
Col. Green. [*having placed chairs for himself and* WILTON]. Your father died
In battle, fighting for the banish'd king!
His brother—
Wil. What! the earl?
Col. Green. No; he had two,
Of whom the earl was but the younger one.
I speak of the elder. Death, that struck your father,
Miss'd him; and, as in spite at his escape,
Left him almost a broken heart—for much
He loved your father! Well; the fight was o'er;
The second brother bann'd—flight was his chance;
But you, an infant, must be left behind
Without a friend.—He linger'd still for you;
For well he knew his younger brother's ward—
For reasons, now to tell were waste of time—
Had more of danger than of safety in 't.
Still had he motives for soliciting
That brother's aid—a purse without a doit!—
He sought it. It was granted readily;
For in succession, failing you, he stood
Next to his elder brother.
Wil. He *was* next.
I was, alas! no bar—I say "alas!"
But for the cause.—It had rejoiced my soul
That elder brother had been heir to all!
Col. Green. Again your father speaks.—Let me go on!
Time flies.
Wil. I heed not time!—I list to you!
Col. Green. Means were supplied. Upon the western coast,
One lowering night, both brothers stood with you;
Your hand in his who loved you as his son!
A barque was in the offing, heavily
Riding at anchor, bound that night to sail;
A boat was waiting—
Wil. Ah!—I recollect

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That father-uncle!—He leap'd into it
With me in his arms!
Col. Green. Yes; while his brother stood
And utter'd no dissuasion, tho' the waves,
Warning the shore with louder waxing swell,
Gave token that the sea was rousing up;
Tho' the rough wind advised you of his mood,
Bawling against you as to turn you back;
Tho' from your eyes the setting sun did hide,
As if averse to tempt you with a look;
Tho' on the land sat gloom and doubt and dread,
As tho' it cried "God help you!"—not—"God speed!"
There stood that brother, like a barren rock,
Upon the shingles, that did follow you
With clamour, like rough friends but kind, that wail
"Good bye" to those they doubt to see again!
Wil. We did not reach the ship!
Col. Green. 'Twas well!—She sank
With every soul on board.—It was not meant
That you should reach her, tho' 'twas thought you did,
By those who wish'd you partners of her fate.
Your course was changed advisedly; the land
Was made again, tho' many miles away;
Distance was safety to you!—Ask no more.
Hands for your fosterage, on which you held
Some claims of blood upon your mother's side,
Your uncle sought; but, reaching found them cold,
Not in defection towards you, but in death.
They were proud ones!—The proudest must shake hands
With Death at last!
Wil. Then was my mother of
A noble stock?
Col. Green. She was. Inquire as yet
No more. Thy uncle was no guardian for thee—
Unsafe the ward of plots and enterprises—
Heaven sent a friend at last!—he gave you to him.
The nobleman who train'd you, Wilton, till
You grew the man you are—who placed you with
The earl, who never half redeem'd his pledge

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To see your fortunes better'd—but, beholding
Your father's face in yours, gave credit to
The elements for ruth he grudged them have,
And thro' inquiries, back'd by power and gold,
Proved his surmises true.

Wil. Speak not of him!
But tell me of that uncle—how fared he?

Col. Green. Remain'd an outlaw still.

Wil. Is he alive?

Col. Green. Better, perhaps, of him we speak no more.

Wil. Is he alive?

Col. Green. Alive?—You well may ask,
When every hour the gibbet look'd for him.

Wil. The gibbet!—Heaven!

Col. Green. Ay, sir. It had been well
For you, your uncle in his bed had died!

Wil. I heed not how
My uncle died—I only heed his death.
The manner of it, but for him, I wish
Other than what it was, if such it was!
I heed the shame? Were he alive, and now
In jeopardy of such extremity,
With all the dismal stages yet to pass,
I 'd stand beside him in the felon's dock;
I 'd lie beside him in the convict's cell;
I 'd walk beside him to the fatal tree—
Which, if I could, with marble I 'd supplant—
A monument, whereon I would record
His honour'd name, and all he did for me,
And under-grave my own in love and gratitude!

[COL. GREEN *rushes up to the table, throws himself into a chair, and hides his face in his hands.*

What ails you, sir? You are convulsed. Sir!—sir!
What ails you?—Speak to me!—Or can't you speak,
Or don't you hear?—You shake from head to foot.
What shall be brought you?—Whom shall I call for?

Col. Green. [*starting up*]. Call
For Henry Sherbrooke!—If you know not him,
Then find me Wilton Brown.—'Tis all the same—

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Child—stripling—man—my eldest brother's son—
The boy that stood upon the beach with me
Twelve years and more ago!

Wil. My uncle!

Col. Green. Ay!

Unscathed! Alive! as ne'er he was before.
The uncle in whose arms you lay, the night
We took the boat upon that stormy beach.

Wil. Take me again to them, or else I drop!

Col. Green. Rouse thee, boy, rouse thee! Something is to do!

Collect thyself—the duke!—'Tis near the time!

Wil. From what a trance have you awaken'd me
Of happiness, to what reality!

Col. Green. Reality! Why, Wilton, look on me;
Ag'd in my prime, the work of years out-done
By watchings, strugglings, strainings, spent in vain!
Of glory deeply smit, as you with love,
Yet baffled in my wooing worse than you!
Reality! There 's none, boy, but the thought
Of doing right; He grasps who holds to that!
You 'll do your duty?

Wil. Will I not?

Col. Green You will!

Wil. Uncle, 'tis death!—but I'll go thro' with' t still!

[*They go out.*

SCENE III.—*A place near Kensington Palace.*

Lord Byer. This summons to the king fell out perversely.
As jaded traveller, when drawing near
His journey's end, feels every mile a league,
So, my revenge at hand, but still delay'd,
Turns minutes into hours! Ten stages Time
Has paced since noon, still lagging more and more;
And now he seems to stop! Will he go on?
He 's half way to the next; yet, to my thought,
He has not stirr'd! Life, measured by suspense,

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Lasts ages!—Talk of threescore years and ten!
A day, an hour, has durance of a life!
Yet am I ill at ease on more accounts
Than this. My colleagues eye me with strange looks;
Whisper apart! I heard them name—and more
Than once—Lord Sunbury.—Is he expected?
And if he is, my office near the king
Draws to a close. No matter!—I am still
The Earl of Byerdale! My brother's death,
My nephew's spurious birth, assure me that!
Whate'er hangs loose, hate can't unrobe me there.
I'll home! What keeps my coach? Will 't never come?
I need its help! Impatience yearns for speed.

SCENE IV.—*A Chamber in Lord Byerdale's.*

Enter the DUKE OF GAVESTON *and* LADY LAURA.

Lady Lau. Why, father, come we hither?
Duke of Gav. They know best
Who guided us. The ceremony here
They judge, perhaps, with better grace perform'd
Than in my prison-house. Their compact kept,
The stipulation it was granted on,
Although abandon'd as to hour and place,
I shall fulfil, whate'er the hour and place,
Much as my blood rebels!
Lady Lau. Came they not in
Along with us?
Duke of Gav. Yes; but held back to speak.
Lady Lau. [*aside*]. I see no priest;
I read no bridals in his looks—though love
Is there—but such as finds its hopes a blank!
Not once he took my hand, nor came so much
As even within reach on't; when, had I seen
One proffering step, I had met his half-way.
I thought to be his wife to-morrow, and
The day is farther off, if e'er to come,
Or I mistake, when he shall call me bride!
He comes!—Why comes he?—To forbid the banns!—

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I know it.—Can he find no other lips
With theme so harsh to jar his lady's ear?

Enter WILTON *and* COLONEL GREEN, *and* LORD SUNBURY.

Duke of Gav. So far we have done your pleasure passively,
Nor halt we yet. The stipulation
Whereon our full enlargement was vouchsafed—
Your union with my daughter—though foregone
By your own choice, when by agreement due,
Lies at your option still. This hand is yours
When he, whose holy act of two makes one,
Shall minister the nuptial ceremony.

Wil. First let me bless this hand so proffer'd me!
Bless it for life that it would give to me,
Enrich'd by all that fondest heart of man
E'er fancied in its wildest coveting,
Of beauty, chastity, and goodness—all
Enrich'd by holiest, most surpassing love!
May plighting wait it from some happy palm
Of purer blood than his who holds it now,
Of clasp as honest—will as strong to cleave!—
Else!—ere the priest for ever makes it his,
May Heaven in its sweet mercy wrest it thence,
And save the gift that else were cast away,
As now 'tis torn from mine.

Lady Lau. Wilton!

Duke of Gav. My child!
Hold up! If, sir, my scruples sway this act,
This act, that gives them way, has vanquish'd them.
The earl has kept his word, and the condition
Whereon 'twas pledg'd, and which I had withheld
With all my heart, with all my heart I yield.

Wil. The earl has kept his word, but was forestall'd.
To wed your daughter I was doubly bound,
And am so still, so you will have us wed;
Whereof the choice now solely rests with you,
Now fully freed from all contingencies.
My birth was yet a secret to me, which

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I knew the earl possess'd, and which to win,
I pledged an oath ne'er to divulge to you
The knowledge on 't, while yet the trench remained
'Twixt you and liberty. The knowledge came,
And with it such abasement of my blood,
As, well I knew, no drop of yours would brook!
What course was I to take?—Time pacing on!
The hour almost within a stride!—your life
In jeopardy, as I believed!—your shame
The ransom, without option to refuse
Or grant!—my will beleaguer'd solemnly.
All that of endless din, and strife, and wrack
Is told of chaos, gather'd up and penn'd,
I felt within my soul!

Lady Lau. Is this man noble?
Is he not, father? If he be not, rend
All patents that make birth! Wilton, go on!
I see the end!—you sought for other means
To set my father free?

Wil. I did. A friend
Supplied me with them. 'Twas the king that oped
Your prison door. You are at liberty
Without the aid of barque or foreign land,
Without the gift of child or aught to me—
A man whose birth, whate'er his truth may be,
Bearing, or reach, refuses him a name,
Drawing the breath he could not help but draw,
Unsanction'd by the priest!

Lady Lau. Why start you, father?

Duke of Gav. No priest the union of your parents bless'd?

Wil. None, sir; what noble dame would wed with me?

Lady Lau. I—or I never wed!

Duke of Gav. Daughter!

Lady Lau. Where worth is,
Give honour, or nowhere! O, truth! lives shame
Where you abide? Manhood, go beg, if flaws
In your escutcheon point you out to scorn!
He who foregoes high fortune for a blur

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That in his proper nature hath no germ,
She doubly should enforce her favours on!
Confess it, father, noble as thou art!
Thy blood it is that's speaking in thy child;
To generosity be generous!
Thy daughter's heart is wedded to his worth;
Give him the thing that's second to her heart—
The hand it nourishes!

Duke of Gav. Never!

Lady Lau. [*After a pause, throwing herself on* WILTON'S *neck*]. O, Wilton!

[LORD BYERDALE *enters in the back-ground.*

Lord Byer. Tied!—Tied!—Fast tied! and now my triumph comes!
Solace for e'en disgrace! [*Comes forward*]. Joy, my lord duke!
Joy of your son-in-law! I told your grace
He was of noble stock, and told you true—
My eldest brother's love-begotten son!
His father's title and estates, 'tis true,
Cleave not, by custom, to his parentage:
But what o' that? Fowlers that miss the game,
But yet come near to it, find comfort there!
Your daughter had been married to an earl,
Had but some dozen words been mumbled, ere
Her husband's mother gave him to the light!

Wil. My lord, we are not wed.

Lord Byer. How came you here?
'Tis false! Without the priest's due offices
I took full heed no bolt should yield him way.

Wil. The master of the prison drew the bolt!

Lord Byer. The governor?

Wil. The governor of him.
The king's own order the good duke enlarged,
Enabled me to keep my oath without
Offence against my honour—snared by thee,
Unnatural uncle! Thus of half its aim
Thy malice baulk'd, these are unscath'd and free;
Thy only victim thy own brother's son!

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Lady Lau. Unscath'd and free!—and thou a victim, Wilton?
Lop off the part of a limb, and, if you will,
Call what remains unscath'd—there may be gain;
But here is loss and loss, and nothing else!
Unscath'd! O Heaven!—and thou with galled quick!
Father, the word you gave, I ne'er gave back.
It made me his by pledge—I stand so still!
To fortune, honour, I had let him go,
But not to woe and shame. They knot me to him!
Wilton, I share thy voyage, come what will!
I take the sea with thee whate'er thy boat,
Howe'er the wind—where'er the shoal or rock,
Yea, or the whirlpool, which a mouthful makes
Of mariners and ship!—Storms, strandings, wrecks,
Engulfings, there am I, where you're afloat!
Be it but upon a plank—where you go down
I sink!

Col. Green. [*tapping* Lord BYERDALE *on the shoulder*]. A triumph worthy of a man,
To place a goodly youth in such a strait,
That virginhood, at dint of very ruth,
Casts chariness aside—pays heed to naught
Save love, at pity's promptings all resolved,
Whate'er the cost, to succour and to save him!

Lord Byer. Who is he that makes so bold?

Col. Green. One to bold things
Accustom'd, but allow'd ones at the worst;
Not bann'd, at least, by Nature's common laws—
Whose life, at risk, he would not hesitate
To save at peril of another man's.
Yet—could not see his enemy take boat,
With certainty to founder when at sea,
Without dissuading him—yea, grappling him
With arms and heart—though foot to foot next day
Assured to stand against him—life 'gainst life!

Lord. Byer What are you?

Col. Green. One at home beneath a roof
As proud as even this!

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